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SERMONS FOR MY CURATES

BY THE LATE THOMAS T. LYNCH

MINISTER OF MORNINGTON CHURCH, HAMPSTEAD ROAD, LONDON

EDITED BY SAMUEL COX

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LONDON
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.
CITY ROAD

To the Congregation

WORSHIPPING IN

MORNINGTON CHURCH, HAMPSTEAD ROAD

IN MEMORY OF

THEIR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS ATTACHMENT TO

ITS AUTHOR

THIS VOLUME

IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED BY

HIS WIDOW

PREFACE.

IN the winter of 1863—4, soon after Morning-ton Church had been opened, Mr. Lynch, then in very ill health, and suffering cruelly from a painful and fatal disease, determined to attempt an Evening Service. For a time he had been compelled, sorely against the grain, to preach only on Sunday mornings; in the evenings the little Church was closed. The fear that his Congregation might suffer through his inability to conduct two Services in the day was a constant care and grief to him. Hence, against the advice of his more prudent and devoted friends, he resolved to try whether, even with his failing strength, he could not conform to the established usage. It was no pleasure to him to be singular, but a pain. For about a month he forced himself through this addi-

tional labour, his courageous spirit—and he was simply the bravest man I have known—coercing the fainting flesh. But the flesh had its revenge. For three or four days after each of these trial Services, he lay as one dead, incapable of exertion, wellnigh incapable of thought. At the end of the month his kind and skilful physician warned him that he must desist on peril of his life.

He had then, for some years, suffered the torments of *angina pectoris*, and the mere effort to fix his attention often sufficed to induce them. It was only when his spirit was roused by the excitements of public speech and worship that he could master the cruel pain; and even then, as those who heard him will remember, his hand was often clutching at his breast, as though to control the agony he endured; and there were times when it seemed impossible that he should proceed. We who loved him did not then know how much he suffered, or we could hardly have borne to listen to him. "Heart disease" is a convenient general phrase, and covers many forms of malady; and all we knew was

that he had "heart disease"—some form of it which kept his physical powers perilously low, and caused him much occasional distress. Had we known *more*, intense sympathy with his pain might have deprived us of the pleasure with which we listened to the eloquent and impassioned utterances of his rare genius. Had we known *all*, however, perhaps our pleasure would have been even deeper than it was; for it was in these triumphs of the spirit over the body that he really lived: and if the purity and depth of joy are in proportion to the severity of the pain over which it triumphs, what sacred and profound raptures must his have been when, inspired by the Spirit of Truth, the strong Spirit of the strong Son of God, he rose above all the pangs and infirmities of the flesh?

With great reluctance, with many regrets, for never was more willing spirit in weak flesh, he yielded to his physician's advice, and limited himself to a single Service. And now the question arose, Was the experiment of an Evening Service, which had promised very fairly, to be given up or continued in other forms? Like all

brave men, Mr. Lynch had great tenacity, as well as great ardour, of purpose. He resolved that the experiment should be carried on. For a time "supplies," as they are called, were secured; that is, other ministers were invited to occupy the pulpit in the evening. But, as was to have been expected, in this form of it also, the experiment soon broke down. Those who had been drawn to Mr. Lynch by his rare and singular gifts, had little pleasure in listening to men of other or inferior gifts. And then, happily for the Church and the world, the thought occurred to him to which we owe the present Volume.

In his small Congregation Mr. Lynch had many men of culture who were heartily devoted to him and to the cause he represented. And it struck him that were he to write out Services—prayers as well as sermons, these gentlemen would gladly read them to as many as cared to listen. Accordingly, he wrote the Services of which this Volume is composed. They were read, with the exception of the last, by gentlemen whom he forthwith dubbed "My Curates,"

and were heard with admiration and profit by the select audience which met for evening worship.

If the audience was select, it was also small, and grew smaller rather than larger. Even in this form of it, the experiment was not a success. Yet, so indomitable was his spirit, probably Mr. Lynch would have persevered in it, and have carried it to a successful issue in the end, had not the strain of writing these Services proved too great for his ebbing physical powers. To think, to compose, was an unfailing delight to him; the treasuries from which he drew his thoughts seemed inexhaustible: but to *write* was an agony which no words can fully utter. Hardly was he seated at his desk before he was assailed by the rending suffocating pangs of his cruel disease. As the work went on, the anguish grew, until the intolerable agony compelled him to fling himself on the floor, where he lay, patiently and steadfastly enduring the pressure of his great pain. No sooner was the fierce spasm past than he rose, seated himself once more at his desk, and re-

sumed his labour till seized by another intolerable spasm. And thus the day would wear on, labour and anguish alternating many times; until at last, utterly exhausted by the weary conflict, he would lie still and prostrate on the ground. On the original manuscripts of this Volume there are pathetic marks of the agony he endured before he would yield. Here and there, especially toward the close, his handwriting, ordinarily so neat and regular, grows large, straggles wildly across or down the page, and looks as though his hand must have been jerked and dragged by an alien force.

How gallantly his spirit bore him through these painful and dangerous contests is proved by the fact, that some of these Services were written in a single day, although, besides prayers before and after sermon, the majority of them contain discourses which occupied nearly an hour in the delivery. In copying them out for the press, I have found that each of them furnishes, in the mere penmanship, a long and hard day's work for a man in good health. And from this it may be inferred how much they must have cost him,

with his frail body and that perpetually renewed conflict with one of the keenest pains which flesh is heir to.

At last, so terrible and perilous was the exhaustion that followed these attacks, he dreaded the mere sight of a pen; and the physician was once more obliged to interfere, and bid him relinquish the too-exacting task. The task was relinquished while still incomplete. The last sermon was written; but he never found strength to add the prayers, and consequently Service XII. was never used in public.

I hope I have not dwelt unduly on the *cost* at which these Services were produced, on the long agony which this devoted minister of the Truth cheerfully endured, that, up to his powers, and beyond his powers, he might serve God and man. It is surely due, not to his memory alone, but to the world, that, with whatever brevity and reserve, the story of it should be told. Such splendid courage is an honour to humanity, and makes all who hear of it proud that they too are men. It is the more honourable and ennobling when, as in Mr. Lynch's case, combined

with the most perfect modesty. Even those of us who knew him best, knew but little of what he suffered, nor had even so much as heard that he was subject to the "breast-pangs" of which at last he died. And, indeed, no reader of these Services, however candid and generous, could arrive at a fair judgment of them, unless acquainted with the conditions under which they were written. They shew no trace of the excruciating pangs amid which they were produced. There is nothing morbid in them, no sign of weakness or exhaustion. They are clear, bright, genial, full of sweet humour and kindly wit. An ardent devotion to Truth and Righteousness, and to Him in whom Truth and Righteousness became incarnate, breathes through them: they contain passages from which its flame seems to radiate and kindle on us while we read them, as if the very soul of the preacher were being offered in sacrifice to God. As rich in thought, in poetic illustration, in vivid dramatic conceptions as his spoken discourses, they are more obviously, if not more truly, logical in their construction. Brought forth

in pain, they are instinct with the very spirit of health, and of "saving health."

Painful as the effort was, no doubt the act of writing was a valuable check on Mr. Lynch's large discursive habits of thought, and compelled him to a more discriminate use of the inexhaustible wealth of his intellect and imagination. When he spoke, so wide were the excursions in which he often indulged that, although he constantly returned on his main theme, his less cultured or less sympathetic hearers failed to grasp the sequence and connections of his thoughts, and to profit by the side-views of his theme which those excursions were designed to give, and did give to his more capable and susceptible auditors. But, in these written discourses, the logical sequence is either so obvious, or so thinly veiled under the rich profusion of imagery which a born poet could not but use, that no reader who will take pains can well miss it. Here at least, Mr. Lynch has opened up plain as well as pleasant paths, in which the wayfarer, unless he be fool as well as wayfarer, need not err.

I had thought to add a few words in defence, or illustration, of the peculiar forms in which Mr. Lynch, happily for us, conceived and expressed "the common truth." But I cannot rid myself of the feeling that I should be impertinent were I, the brief story of these Services once told, any longer to interpose between the public and one so much wiser than myself. Nor do I doubt that *his* "wisdom will be justified of her children." And therefore I will simply add that the title of this book, "Sermons for my Curates," is that by which Mr. Lynch himself playfully designated these Services; and that, in editing it, I have scrupulously given his very words, save in the few cases where some obvious blunder occurred.

S. COX.

NOTTINGHAM.

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First Service.

Lesson:

Psalms xlvi., and xciii

Matt. xxiv., 35—51.

Luke xiii., 1—9, 22—35.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 90 Psalm, vv. 1—3, 7—9.

Rivulet, 92 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 91 Psalm, 2nd Part, vv. 1, 6—8.

I.

THE MORAL OF ACCIDENTS.

MARCH 20, 1864.

"*They knew not till the flood came, and took them all away.*"—Matt. xxiv. 39.

BUT they might have known. Not those poor sleeping children, not those unwarned fathers and mothers and work-people who were swept away by that great midnight flood at Sheffield, of which we have all been lately hearing.* *These* knew not their danger,

* The terrible inundation, of which the newspapers of the time gave graphic and harrowing reports, occurred only nine days before this sermon was read to the Congregation. On March 11th, 1864, at nearly midnight, the town of Sheffield and its neighbourhood suffered terrible havoc from the bursting of the reservoir from which the town was ordinarily supplied. The water rolled a cataract upon the sleeping villages in the valley below, into and through Sheffield itself, down to the Don at Doncaster. Within the space of two or three hours two hundred and fifty human beings, from the man of eighty to the baby in arms, were drowned in their beds, or in trying

for there was none to tell them, neither was the flood that came upon them the flood of angry judgment. They suffered in their innocency. Even if amongst them, as we cannot but fear from what we know of human nature was the case, there were wicked men unprepared to meet their God, it was not their sinful hands that let loose this flood on themselves and on their neighbours. But the people of whom our Saviour is speaking, though they knew not at what hour the flood would come, knew that it would come, and how they might avoid the ruin that was preparing.

It is our *Saviour*, He who through all the world is to be called by that honoured and beloved title, He who came not to judge the world but to save it; it is He who here speaks of the destruction that so long ago befell unrepenting evil-doers. They had been called to repentance, but they gave no heed to the call. They hardened their neck; and therefore they were

to escape, or were crushed beneath the ruins of the houses in which they dwelt. It was estimated that property to the worth of more than a quarter of a million was destroyed by this terrible catastrophe.

suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. And the like judgments Christ assures us will befall those who now live a negligent and ungodly life, if they will not receive Him when He comes to them in mercy.

How great is the difference between those who know not, yet might have known, and those who know not because there is none to warn! Jerusalem knew not the day of its visitation, though Christ was Himself its Visitor, and spake to it as never man spake. So Jerusalem, that would not yield itself to God, had to yield itself to the armies of Rome. It would not learn of Him who was as "the Rose of Sharon," and would have made joy bloom in the heart of the city; so it had to be taught by a scourge sharp and strong, fashioned as of the thorns of the wilderness.

But how frequent are the cases of calamity that occur without warning, and that are no index to the desert of the sufferers! Every day, yes, and every hour, there are tears for some unexpected trouble. How much is there that seems made but to be marred; how much,

planned well, is thwarted by accidents which no plan could have taken into account! We have but to look into any sheet of those Common Scriptures of the people, the Newspapers, to find sad tales; and many of them are as strange as they are sad. And if we *search* these Scriptures, what tale is there so tragic, what sudden destruction so terrible, that we cannot find a parallel or companion for it in recent or in former records? A few cases, perhaps, stand out from others as beyond rivalry, supreme in terror; such as that hideous holocaust—whole burnt offering—of girls and women at Santiago a short time since. But if to-day we read of a boiler explosion, last year there was one too sadly similar; if to-day of a wreck, the storms of last winter furnished one yet more fearful. If to-day labouring men are buried in the dark mine, but a few months since others were drowned or suffocated there. Accidents to life, to limb, to property are of daily occurrence. One day the light-hearted and light-footed skater falls through the thin trembling ice, and another day the swimmer or the rower is carried

away at the very moment when the triumph of his skill seems most manifest.

What shall we say to these things? We shall not say anything to much purpose about them unless we think before we speak; but if we think aright, our thought will yield us some useful lessons as to our conduct. First, then, What are we to think? Secondly, What are we to do?

1. *What are we to think?* We remember how Paul once said: "Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, *we ought not to think* that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver," or anything graven. And there are many things we ought not to think if we are the children of God, many things we ought not to think if we believe that the Lord is mightier than the floods of many waters: An "accident" is something that happens, happens without our foresight, contrary, in most cases, to our wish and expectation. But can anything happen without a cause for its happening? Surely not. A burning house was set alight by some means, though we may not know by what means. A swollen

river was by some means filled with a roaring flood, though we may not know whether rain on the distant hills, or a broken reservoir, caused the calamity. Things that happen, happen by some means; but then they also happen *for some reason.* And as we ought to think, and do think that, when anything unexpected occurs, there is something to account for its occurrence; so we ought to think, when we hear of an accident, that there is some reason for its permission, some good end to be answered by it.

They who search those Common Scriptures, the Newspapers, will find many things that will trouble their hearts too much, if these hearts be susceptible and sympathizing, unless they also search the Holy Scriptures. If we find God in the Holy Scriptures, then we may find a reason for much that happens in the world, or a reason for believing that there are good ends to be answered by accidents, even the most woeful and destructive, although we may not be able to discover what these are. We ought not to think that things have no explanation because the explanation is not seen as yet. But if we

have faith that the Lord and Judge of all the earth does right, and works ever for good ends, our faith should stimulate our inquiry. Perhaps we *may* find why such an accident as has alarmed us was permitted. May it not do us *this* good —teach us how the like, and even worse, accidents may henceforth be prevented. If we should forget or deny the God who governs the world in righteousness and compassion: can we deny, even if for a while we may forget, the strength of those great agencies that work around us? We do not get rid of accidents by protesting that they ought not to happen, and that, in our opinion, they never would happen if there were a God and He cared for the world. But if there be a God, and if He does care for the world, then faith in Him will help us when neither Prudence nor Science can. And this faith will at the same time make our prudence and science more serviceable to us; for it will instruct us to reason thus:—"We ought to think that, as accidents happen by God's permission, they have a meaning and a lesson for good: let us then seek this out; let us increase our

knowledge of Nature's law; let us exercise fuller care in our obedience to it."

This certainly we ought to think when an accident shows the mighty strength of fire or flood,—that God, who lets fire and water work according to their nature and seem as if they would wreak a vengeance on the innocent, is not so weak in heart and hand that He should let those escape who work wrong and violence in the earth and will not turn at his rebuke.

Now, God values the lives of men and their happiness. He takes pleasure in little children. He prospers honest peaceable industry. And yet a midnight flood sweeps away many houses and much property. The ground over which it passes is left "without form and void;" and still more desolate are the hearts of hundreds whose living treasures are swept away. Was it better that the law by which water presses and flows should have liberty to prevail against a weak barrier, at the cost of so much loss and suffering, than that God should interpose to restrain its force at such a crisis? Let us remember that those laws of Nature by which we suffer some-

times, and so severely, are *always* at work, and that for our advantage. The waves of the sea support a thousand ships at the very time they engulph one. A thousand fountains descend from the hills to feed rivers and supply towns at the very time when the flood cuts for itself an irregular destructive course. A thousand vehicles traverse the streets safely while one, by the loss of a wheel or the stumble of a horse, is overset.

But then we may ask: Is this *all* Omnipotence can do, to frame laws that serve for our welfare in ninety-nine instances, and in the hundredth work our injury or ruin?

Mark the fact that this *is* God's way. What serves us daily may at some hour hurt us; what ministers to life daily may some day wound and weaken us; what blesses millions may slay hundreds. But then, mark our mistake as well as God's way. We mistake if we think welfare is forgotten when injurious accident occurs. We ought not to think that water, which is one of the most marvellously endowed creatures of God, when it drowns and destroys is any the

less the servant of welfare than when it satisfies the thirsty and affords a highway for our commerce. But it then serves welfare in another manner. Man must learn to fashion his work according to God's law. If he *will* build on the sands, then God *will not* sustain his dwelling. If he will make that weak which he ought to have made strong, *God* will not make that weak which He has made strong, to suit man's arrangement. God will not weaken the force of the water because a man has built the embankment too weakly.

But then, perhaps man did not frame his work amiss *wilfully:* and, if he did, it is not *he* who is sure to be the chief loser; his neighbour may be!

Quite true. We suffer from error as well as from fault; and our error may hurt our neighbour even more than ourselves. But we ought to think, first, that it is of more importance God's laws should act uniformly than that we should be spared inconvenience and distress by their irregular action. And, secondly, we ought to think, that in a world which is one great

partnership, as we gain in so many ways by our neighbour's skill and honesty, it is better that we should be sufferers with him, or by his means, because of the want of these good qualities, than that there should not be a deep impression made on our minds of their great value and necessity. And, thirdly, we ought to think that so comprehensive and far-reaching is God's plan for men, that, though we may gain what we do not deserve by other men's ability, and suffer what we do not deserve by their want of ability, yet no man, in the end, is made a sacrifice to the general interest as if he had no worth of his own; and no man, in the end, is permitted to be well off because of the general success, if he has made no fair contribution thereto. And, fourthly, we ought to think that, however much God cares for each man's present good, He cares yet more for his permanent good, cares most of all for the advancing and permanent good of the world.

Whoever has opened his eyes to see what men are, and his mind to consider how they must be dealt with for their welfare, must know

that the world would become an idler and more wicked world than it is, if things always "went," as we say, "well with us," if there were no accidents to make us careful.

Truly, the "Chapter of Accidents" is no unimportant chapter in the great volume of God's providence. Instead of Chance being the determiner of accidents, Wisdom the boldest and the subtlest rules over them and their effects.

But then, though we do occasionally speak of favourable accidents, things that fall out quite according to our wishes though against our expectations, the "Chapter of Accidents" is, with this exception, such a sad one that we shrink from its perusal, even though it treats of Divine wisdom!

True. There is much useful reading that is not easy; much which should be read that not everybody *can* read: much that a brave reader will try to master to which even he will not dare to confine his reading. There is terror in the world as a story and as a spectacle. Verily, we have not to do with a weak God. Verily, if we believe Him to be wise, we must believe Him to

be *very* wise. What a heaven must that be for which it is worth while to endure such a world as this! Nay, what a future must be in reserve for this earth itself, to make the expenditure of labour and sorrow through so many generations a price well paid! When it can be said, "See, *this* is what man has got, and *that* is what it cost him to get it,"—will it appear that God's patience and man's affliction have been wasted? No; we ought not to think that. Remember that, to Christians, the Cross stands central in the story of the world. We look to a Sufferer who can make darkest things hopeful, and who is Surety that "the sea shall give up her dead," the floods yield what they have carried away, and all things and men, in general resurrection, appear before God for judgment, that every disaster may manifest the blessing that was connected with it, and every victim give proof that he never was abandoned, and every severity show the goodness of God shining through it.

Great and calm, then, may be our expectation of a good end for the world; but we must exercise ourselves in a thoughtful faith that our ex-

pectation may be calm and great. And reasoning about the accidents that happen to other people, and to the world at large, will not enable us to endure patiently accidents that occur to ourselves, or to await tranquilly those that may occur, unless we cultivate the sense of God's fatherly care over us, and gratefully consider the many mercies we receive from Him. God is good; and it is a little thing to say his Providence does us much more good than harm; we affirm a far greater thing than this,—his Providence is over all harm for good.

But if, while we affirm that accidents are so ordered as to promote welfare, we also declare that they are too many, and too terrible, to contemplate without alarm and distress: ought we not farther to think how woeful is man's subjection to nature, how glorious will be nature's subjection to man? When we have shown that this world is well managed, we have not therefore shown that it is a good world. If we go over a prison, and see that its arrangements are excellent, and salutary for the offenders who are confined there, we do not come out and say: "What

a pleasant place!" If we have witnessed a surgical operation, by which a man was saved from death at the cost of pain, we do not cry: "How delightfully the surgeon handled the knife!" None of us would say: "With what a fine strong rush, with what a grand beautiful roar, the waters broke forth through their embankment!" Sorrows make us weep, and terrors make us shudder, however firm our faith in God may be. And the subjection of man to accidents of so many and such afflictive kinds is to be deplored, though, on behalf of God, it is to be justified. The earth is at present too much the lord of its inhabitants. Man is not, by wisdom and virtue, fitted to be lord of all things round him, "monarch of all he surveys." But how glorious will be the time when, by a word, he shall arrest the flood, when he shall command the fire that it burn not, because burning is not needed! We are subjected now—not altogether, but in great part—to Nature. Yet Nature is already in part, by science and skill, subjected to man. And, hereafter, it may be given to man to share that spiritual word of command pos-

sessed by his Lord, who spake, and the winds and waves obeyed Him.

Let us now collect and enumerate a few thoughts that we ought to think when we are considering sad things that happen. (1) How many accidents are but slight as to the hurt they do in comparison with the service of the lesson they teach. (2) From how many things "going to happen" we are saved when loss and danger appear imminent. (3) How manifest and honourable are the work and courage of man in averting accidents, and in lessening the harm they do. (4) How incessant is the beneficial operation of the great natural laws, and how varied in kind is their benefit. (5) How careless and untrue is the work of many men; how needful is it that they should have a warning they will heed. And how often, after all, does the right accident happen obviously at the right time and to the right kind of person. (6) How certain it is that unfaithfulness in work will bring disasters, small and great, which are misnamed when we call them "accidents;" for, though we knew not, we might have known that they were

sure to happen. And (7) how certain it is, too, that, if anything favourable to us unexpectedly occurs, we shall not be able to take advantage of it unless we are men of some resource and some character.

11. We come now to our second question: *What are we to do?* and on this we need speak but briefly. Sometimes half an hour's thinking issues in a resolve that may be uttered in half a minute, and which we may begin to carry out at once. All just thinking has a practical tendency, even though nothing distinctly preceptive be added to it.

What are we to *do*, then? We are *not* to eat, drink, and marry, careless of the way in which we do these things, and unmindful of our duty to God in them, as if the world, that can take care of itself, would take care of us without any good heed of our own. Some flood, if not the great flood that ends all our vain confidence, may come and carry away our food and our home. We *are* to ask and get answered the question, "What must I do to be saved" and

to be safe from evil? We are to make mercy the trust of our life, because we are learning to make justice the rule of our life. We are to keep in memory the things we learn, that we may not vainly say when floods come, "We knew it not," while yet we *did* know, only we had forgotten. We are to commit our way unto the Lord, while yet we keep our own eye on our path, and hew away the thorns with our axe.

But here are a few specific practical lessons. We hear of an accident occasioned by incapacity or by unfaithful work on river or sea, in the mine or in the mill, in shop or in street, at home or out in the field. Let us, then, do our own work thoroughly, and, by example and influence, promote honesty and thoroughness of work in the world. Let us not have such regard for incapables as to have none for those who may suffer by their neglects or mistakes; nor such regard for profit in cash that we fear not to risk loss in life. Let us promote the inquiries and experiments of Science; and if our conscience make us careful, let our mind make our care intelligent. Let us subdue *ourselves*, our idleness, cupidity,

and rashness, assured that no one can rule Nature unless he rules himself; knowing that we are as sentinels on guard who will give no warning if their mind be absent, busy with foolish dreams, or if they be drunken with idle pleasures. Let us be compassionate to the sufferer, knowing that our flesh and our risk are as his flesh and his risk; and saying, "How can he who gives no help bear to take help when his turn comes to need it and receive it!" Let us, seeing that so much we have may at any time be the prey of the spoiler, store up the inconsumable imperishable riches. *Many men have lost their lives by accident; no man ever lost his soul by accident.* And yet, the accident that cuts short a man's life may bring his soul into a sad disgraced condition, whence he has had ample opportunity to have saved it. Neither flood nor thief, neither moth nor fire, can bereave us of the durable riches of pure affection, right principle, honest and true intelligence:—these, therefore, let us lay up in store.

And while we strive more to do our work thoroughly, let us care less what may happen to

us as we do it. He who most guards against accident should fear it the least. He knows it may happen. Let it happen, then; but not by his fault, nor by the fault of a neighbour whom he might have warned, but has not. But do not let him fret his mind because he knows not God's mind, and has no pledge that nothing painful shall ever happen to him. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. All things must work together for good to the true and trustful.

Let life to us be watchful and earnest. It need not therefore be dull, nor without its play and ease. How does frivolity gain an excitement from terror itself! The flood that works a ruin makes a spectacle, and thousands go forth to see. Men sup heartily on horrors, and sleep well after supper. Yet these, too, learn some lesson, we may hope, and receive some salutary impression. But not by such is the world much helped. The mob goes to view the ravage; the Mayor sits to consult for the sufferers. With honour comes responsibility and grave tasks. Sentimental excitement about the "days of

God," the ancient flood, the last great fire, may be quite possible where it is not at all profitable. Have we not sometimes been visited in fear, and yet oftener in love? Let us heed the warning, receive the mercy, know the day of our visitation, and both save ourselves and others from the overrunning floods that sweep evil men and evil doers away.

Prayer before Sermon.

OUR Father who art in heaven, wide and great is that heaven above us, which is to us as the veil of Thy dwelling-place, and mighty are the winds which sometimes blow across the world; but no wind makes the sun's flame quiver, no wind disturbs the calmness of the stars. Even so steadfast and so calm art Thou. Yea, Thou mightest speak, and with Thy word change the face of heaven and quench the lights Thou hast kindled; but Thy love is unquenchable, and the light of Thy wisdom cannot fail. O that our faith were as calm and steadfast as Thy heaven! But Thou art our Father, and canst so teach us what Thy mind toward us is, and how careful and continued Thy regard for us, that at last we shall cease to tremble before Thee, and only trust, love, and adore Thee.

Hallowed be Thy name. Lord, increase our faith in that great and glorious Name. Thou hast given forth the knowledge of Thy mercy,

and bestowed on us its abundant promise, in Thy Son. In Him Thou hast named Thyself Jesus, the Saviour. Thou just God, Thou strong compassionate Saviour, to Thee, if at first we turn as those who fly affrighted from a tempest, may we soon learn to come as children who run to their Father's arms. And art Thou in very deed our soul's most faithful and most tender Guardian? Is it Thou, most mighty God, who desirest to be known as full of gentle kindness to Thy children? Why, then, do we forget Thee, and distrust Thee?

Lord, we remember and confess our faults this day. We would know Thee better, and serve Thee better. Now will we call upon our hearts to remember Thy goodness toward us. Now will we call upon all the confused company of our thoughts within us to keep silence, and listen to the heavenly truths with whose voices Thou seekest to comfort and delight us. We know that earth is not our home, nor time our portion. We know that in our flesh are frailty and corruption. We know that our days cannot all be as days of heaven upon the earth. We

know that here there are moth and rust; that here the wind may rise, and the flood rush, and the fire consume. Yea, O Lord, we know how many things there are that make for our misery. But shalt Thou be, to any of us, as an unknown God? Thou art a great King, and Thy Name is dreadful to those who resist Thee. Lord, we would yield ourselves to Thee, that to us Thy Name may be a tower of strength. May we know more of our Hope and our Confidence, that we may think less of our misery. Thy hand is indeed strong; Thou art able to destroy. But Thou hatest nothing Thou hast made; Thou castest away none who seek Thee.

Lord, teach us not to measure Thy intelligence, Thy love, by our own. Let not our faith be confounded because our wisdom is. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. Let us believe in Thy compassion though six troubles, yea, seven, vex our souls: let us rely on Thy justice though man and beast, and field and city, be overwhelmed by a flood. What though the mountains shake? Thy constancy is firm. What though they be carried into the midst of the

sea? Thou canst exalt again what Thou hast brought low; Thou canst bring up even from the dead that which we think has perished for ever. Thou, who hast all souls to care for, hast eternity to work in. May we so consider Thy strange works of terror, that we may not forget Thy familiar works of goodness. May we so read the promise of life in Jesus Christ, that, though a host of doubts and fears should rise up against us, we may be confident in Thine equitable regard for all men, assured that, when the mystery of God is ended, the whole story of the earth shall glorify Thee.

God of the fatherless, Comforter of the afflicted, Inspirer of pity in the heart of man, to Thee we commend those who are left in want and distress by the ravage of the flood Thou hast permitted. Prosper every effort to console and to relieve them. And grant that, out of this great evil, manifold good may come.

Often to us Thou art so darkly wise that we scarce can trust Thee with the welfare of our own dear ones. But in Thee is no darkness at all: and, Lord, should we leave Thee, to whom

shall we go? Thou hast the word, Thou the powers, of eternal life. Shew us that Thy Son is Thy Surety. May we trust Thee because of Thy love in Him. Lord, open Thou our mouth, and we will shew forth Thy praise; for Thou art our Refuge in all generations.

Receive, we beseech Thee, our worship, through Him who came once for all to purge the world of sin, and comfort it concerning sorrow. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

GOD of the troubled world, Father of our spirits exercised therein, grant us Thy peace. The day is ending; may we take hence its quiet and effectual blessing. Our heart has made to Thee its entreaty; our lips have uttered their praise; our minds have exercised themselves in things too hard for us, wert not Thou our Teacher. Accept our offerings; bless our efforts. Safely would we this night rest; cheerfully would we rise on the morrow: in our days we would have much gladness, for our work a bountiful reward. Lord, thou knowest the heart of man, and that such are his desires. But teach us to say, Thy will be done. Teach us that our own right hand cannot save us. May we surrender ourselves to Thy keeping, even when most we endeavour to keep ourselves and others. Thou knowest our way, and we know not Thine. But we know Thy promise; we know Thy thoughts for us, and that they are

wise and pitiful. O Spirit of good-will, peace, strength, make our hearts Thy home. O Rock of Ages, be Thou the foundation on which we build our hopes. O righteous Father, Lord of events, Judge of spirits, Thou lookest on the earth, and it trembleth, and on the hills and they quake; but Thy children have a place of refuge; and Thou, the especial Saviour of them that believe, art also the Saviour of all men. Let not the flood of the ungodly carry any of us away, and if ever adversity cometh like a flood, holding Christ by the hand, may we walk with Him upon the waters, or sink, as He did, to rise again in glory. Amen.

Second Service.

Lesson:

John xx. 19—31.

1 Peter, ch. i.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 60 Hymn, 2 Book, vv. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8.

Rivulet, 40 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 108 Hymn, 1 Book.

II.

ST. THOMAS; OR, SEEING AND BELIEVING.

APRIL 3, 1864.

> "*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"—John xx. 29.

THE Apostle Thomas is one of a distinct and very interesting group. This group consists of Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and himself. These four are always named together in the lists given of the Apostles. Of the Twelve, Peter is the first, Judas the last. First, we have a warm-hearted man, but one who denied his Lord; last, a cold-hearted man, one who betrayed his Lord. But the man who was unfaithful in the hour of terrible extremity wept warm tears though bitter; while

the disappointed schemer, who had been Christ's disciple for the "world's" sake, having sold his King for the price of a slave, hanged himself on a tree. Men who seek elevation for the sake of mere covetousness and vain-glory do, as it were, but hang themselves; they rise but to fall. And confident men, however warm-hearted and sincere, may need to be taught, by sorrowful but salutary shame, that he who "putteth on his harness must not boast as he who putteth it off;" that a heart may be true and yet not firm; and that a sudden stroke in an unguarded hour may disarm and overset the strongest man. But Peter's *heart* was much more hurt than his pride; for, after all, he had much more love in him than boast.

However, considering that we have a Judas last, and, first, only a Peter, it will not surprise us that we find in the list an unbelieving Thomas, and a James and John whose tempers for a while were as fiery as their love was sincere.

The group to which the Apostle Thomas belongs is the middle one in the Apostolic

list—for there are three;* and of this middle group *Philip* is always named first. Philip was of Bethsaida in Galilee. Jesus "findeth Philip;" and then Philip "findeth Nathanael," that is to say, Bartholomew; for it is well-nigh certain that Nathanael is Bar-Tolmai, son of Tolmai, or, as we otherwise read it, Bartholomew. Thomas's group, then, consists of, besides himself and Philip, the guileless "Israelite indeed" who so frankly confessed his faith, saying: "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel;" and of Matthew the Publican and friend of publicans, afterwards, too, the grave and weighty Evangelist. This man made a feast for Christ, one of the few feasts to which He was invited; and was honoured and rewarded by being permitted to spread another feast for the world, called "the Gospel by

* Peter, James, John, and Andrew are always named together, Peter heading this group, and the others following in different orders in the different Gospels. The second group consists of Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas; Philip always first, and the others following in different orders. The third group is composed of James the son of Alphæus—always first; Jude, his brother; Simon Zelotes, another brother; and Judas Iscariot, in every sense, the last.

Matthew." To how many "hungry poor," seeking comfort and instruction, has the Spirit of God called, saying: "Come hither; sit here in a good place:" and then they have gone forward to that good table in the feast-chamber which we call the "Sermon on the Mount," a pure and bountiful table at which their souls have been satisfied.

With the Evangelist and Nathanael the guileless is associated Philip, to whom Jesus, looking round on the multitude who had been hearing Him, said: "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this He said to prove him." Philip, then, though a true man, was not perfect in faith any more than Thomas. A true man he was, for only true men "find" true men; and he "found" Nathanael, trusted him, and knew he was just the man to whom he should tell the good news that they had "found" Him of whom Moses and the Prophets had written. This man Jesus "proved," as in various suitable ways He will prove us all. The "enemy" proves us that, being found wanting, he may scorn and expose us; our

heavenly Friend proves us that, being found wanting, He may admonish and supply us. Philip told Jesus, in effect, that he thought they were not rich enough to feed so many people. "It would take," said he, "two hundred pennyworth of bread; and where are we to get the two hundred pennies?" Ah, Philip, you do not know how rich a Master you have! But you shall learn, and you will not forget the lesson.

It was Philip to whom certain Greeks came, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." It was Philip who said to Jesus, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The Greeks would see Jesus, but Philip would see God. And to him Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Now it is at the very time when Philip thus speaks and Christ thus replies that we find Thomas also mentioned — the remaining member of Philip's group, and that one with whom we have especially to do. And it was Christ's reply to a question put by Thomas that led to Philip's request, "Shew us the Father."

Thomas is mentioned four times. We hear of him first when Christ is sent for to visit the sick Lazarus. Is Thomas angry with the tender sorrowing Sisters who are saying in their hearts, "O will He come! will the Lord come ere our brother die!" The hours pass, and the Lord does not come. But He will come, too late as it shall seem; but not too late to say to one who does not doubt his love yet cannot feel the strength of his consolation, "Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Yes, if we only *believe*, we shall *see*. If Thomas heard these words spoken, why did he not remember them afterwards? Thomas and the rest of the disciples, when the message about Lazarus's sickness comes, know that if Jesus goes into Judea, though He goes on a kind errand, yet He ventures on a dangerous journey. The Jews of late sought to stone Him. This time the disciples fear they will succeed as well as seek. But He will go. He thinks more of his friend than of Himself: and shall not his disciples think more of Him than of themselves? It is

Thomas's opinion that they should. Probably Thomas was not angry with the Sisters for sending; only sorry that they should bring the Master into danger. It was natural and right, he thought, for affectionate women to care thus for a brother, one, too, whom Christ loved: still, he was sorry. Jesus waited two days, and then said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." "Lord," said the disciples, "if he sleep, shall he not do well?"—well enough without us, they meant, so that we need not encounter this risk. "I go to wake him," said Jesus; and explained that he was dead. Then said Thomas, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." A noble but distrustful speech! Incredulous affectionate man! so much courage, so little hope; such real love, such imperfect faith! "He is sure to die," argued Thomas; "why should we survive Him?" Such men as Thomas—that is to say, till they have become really convinced of Christ's resurrection, till by the power of the Spirit in their hearts they can call Jesus truly, "Lord"—will never make any enterprise prosper, and yet they will never forsake it. Their

desponding fidelity is nevertheless acceptable—Christ will not reject it; but it is not as serviceable as it is acceptable.

We next meet with Thomas on the last evening of our Saviour's life. "Be not troubled," said the Lord; "I am going away, but it is to prepare a place for you; and I will come again. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas saith unto Him, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Now surely this was the very moment for the Apostle to have remembered his former distrust, and to have reasoned thus: "Did I not think, when He proposed to go into Judea again after He had been threatened with stoning, that He was taking the wrong way, and yet it proved the right one? Did I not think that we should all die, and yet none of us died? When He says that we know whither He is going, and the way, He means to say to us, 'My way, that is *your* way; when have I led you wrong? have you not learned that I am always going forward to some new good work? *That* is whither I am going. And do you not

know that I delight to have you with me? You know the end toward which I travel, and that it is good; and you know the way that you are to take, for *I* lead, *you* follow.'"

But Thomas did not reason thus, and understand Christ's words thus: he said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Even this he would not have said unless he had *desired* to know the way. He was a true follower of Christ, and thoroughly resolved to continue one. The spiritual rule about ways is this: that we are to trust the Truth and follow it wherever it leads us. But we want to know more particularly where it will lead us; and it is not always best that we should know. We must hear Truth, that is, Christ, saying to us, "Am I not the Truth? is not, To follow Me, your way? do I not now give you life? will I not bring you to full life?" The apostle Thomas wanted to know, in a plain literal manner, where Christ was going. And he cared to know this, not as a coward, who, as he asked the question, meant in his heart, if he did not like the answer to the question, to turn

aside into some other way. Perhaps in his heart he suspected that Christ meant He was going to die, that "the way" He talked of lay through the grave; and he wanted to know for certain what yet he dreaded to learn. O shrinking heart that yet is resolute! Thomas is apprehensive of evil: can he bear it? why should Christ brave it? And yet he has not one thought of leaving this adventurous, this too bold, Master. He is nearly sure his Lord means that He must die; and of course they must die with Him. He shrinks from dying, but of flying he does not even think.

Now, Christ does not give him an answer that would have been dreadful to him, as He might have done; but one whose spiritual form hides for awhile the literal fact as to the way He is about to take. It is a re-assuring answer. "*I* am the way," says Christ, "and I take you to the Father: *that* is whither you are going; and it is by me, and along with me, you go. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "Ah," says Thomas's companion apostle Philip, "do but shew us the Father, Lord, and that sufficeth

us!" Here are two men; the one longs to see "the way," the other longs to see "the Father." They are neither of them without belief, though each is an imperfect man in his believing. But they differ. Thomas's defect relates to *the way* rather, Philip's to *the end* rather. The Lord is the way; the Father is the end. "O to find God in his fulness and his glory!" cries Philip: "O to see evidently that such a way as this is the right way!" cries Thomas. But, Philip, can you ever find anything better than Jesus Christ? You *have* found God. Rest here, rest now. In his Son you can *see*, and you can *have*, Himself. True, you see as yet only the Father's goodness, and see not yet all things put under Him. Hereafter you shall see the goodness of God in his glory, as now you see the glory of God in his goodness. But think not too much now of the glory of your Father's dominion; know Him in his soul—his love; know Him in his Son.

"O, Philip," pleads our Lord, "have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" And, "O, Thomas," we now ex-

claim, "be not discouraged, distrustful, because of 'the way.' He who leads you may indeed now lead you aside from earth's pleasant fountains into the wilderness; away from quiet home, through the threatening crowd, to the painful cross: but, hereafter, He shall lead you to the heavenly fountains, by the side of the river of life. His gentleness, as the Lamb ordained to death, shall, now, meekly overcome your doubts, and perfect your faith; and, hereafter, lead you where you shall cry, 'Once I thought we should all die with Him, but now we all live with Him for evermore!'"

Some are like Philip: if they could but realise "the end," they would not care for "the way." Some are like Thomas: if they could but know for certain that so strange a "way" is the right way, then the thought of "the end" would be sure to cheer them,—so, at least, they suppose. As to Philip and Thomas, each has in him somewhat of the other; and we all have in us somewhat of them both.

And now, we may *thus* discriminate the four men of the middle Apostolic group, before we

pass on to consider the special incident in Thomas's story. These are Philip, Nathanael, Thomas, Matthew. They are all *reflective* men; the group is *a reflective* group. Matthew is a moral methodic man, of comprehensive rather than of nimble mind. He desires an outward reign of justice on the earth. "*Can* things ever be right?" we may suppose him saying; "and *when* will the kingdom come outwardly, and *how* can it come?" Nathanael says, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" But when he sees the good, he believes in it with all his heart, and is told that he shall see yet greater things than can be shown him now—things which perhaps he had given up expecting to see as much as he should have expected. It was enough for him to sit under his fig-tree and meditate on holy things: what could he do for unholy Nazareth? what expect from it?

All these four reflective men are in some way *unbelievers*. Nathanael cultivates inward piety, but *he cannot believe* that the holy heaven and the common world shall ever be one, as if angels came and went between them. Matthew

earnestly desires, and promotes as he can, the rule of justice among men; but *he cannot believe* that the law of Truth will ever be the law of outward religious and political society. Philip is a student of the Scriptures, and can see much of the God of Israel in them and in the world, but not enough anywhere; and *he cannot believe* that God will show Himself to man so as thoroughly to content the pious as the world seems to satisfy the worldly. Thomas has chosen the "better part;" he is determined to know the truth and not to trust to deceits. He, for one, will examine the pretensions and the evidences of things. He *has* examined, and is quite convinced that Jesus has no mere pretensions. Jesus, at least, is a real man, if there be no other and never should be. And yet Thomas *cannot believe* that "the way" Jesus takes is a safe successful way.

Excellent men these four! reflective men; yet all in some degree, each in his own manner, unbelievers! In temperament Philip is the more active, Nathanael the more meditative,

Matthew the more judicial, Thomas the more desponding.

And now that Jesus has gone away, what will become of Thomas? what of his faith? Alas, has he not, as it were, *seen*—yes, seen with his own eyes — his Lord cast into the depths of the sea? He, the *gold* of the world, has sunk "as lead in the mighty waters." The depths have covered Him. He will rise no more.

"But, Thomas, Philip, who is such a reader of the Scriptures, should remind you of the words, 'Thou hast shewn Him the path of life.' Cannot God make a way through the seas? Were not His footsteps once in the mighty waters? Why not, then, in *these* deep dark waters?"

No! All the great waves and billows have gone over Him. Thomas has *seen* Him sink, *seen* Him die: and who ever *saw* a man alive again after his death?

It is significant that Thomas was not with the other disciples when, on the evening of

his resurrection-day, our Lord visited them. He had gone alone, if not to weep, to brood and sigh. Some of the disciples in the hour of their sorrow would prefer each other's society; they would find a little strength, perhaps even a little comfort, in such companionship. But Thomas, melancholy man, must go alone. He is a man whose heart has chosen the *end* it would have; but his mind is now convinced that there is no *way* to it. "He said *He* was the way," the Lord Jesus did—"the way, the truth, and the life," says this desponding disciple to himself: "and He *was* the truth—yes, He was the truth; but, alas, not the life; and as a way, what end has He reached? the grave, only the grave!" And here poor Thomas sighs very deeply. Not into *his* thoughts will it enter, to go and *see* the grave, see whether perhaps Jesus may have risen. So it is that a disposition which leads us to depend too much on sensible evidence, may deprive us of that spirit of enterprise by which we might attain such evidence. Had Thomas gone to the Sepulchre, Jesus might have shewn himself to *such* a "seeker,"

as He did to Mary Magdalene. But Thomas sat still, hoping nothing, but grieving much. And if, as is possible, Philip, or one of the rest, found him that day, and cried, "The Lord is risen!" he perhaps only shook his head and felt sure his friends were deceived. If they had indeed seen His "spirit," Thomas had almost rather not see his spirit. He had thought Israel had at last "gotten *a man* from the Lord," a strong true man: of what avail would *a spectre* be? what could a "spirit" do? Thomas had rather not see the "spirit," if indeed they really had seen it; it would make him think all the more sadly of *the real, lost, Man.*

So, when the disciples met that happy evening, Thomas was not with them. And yet that evening, while the disciples were assembled in fear, the Lord Himself visited them and spake peace. Not even the joyful certainty, of at least some among them, that their Master was no longer in the grave could quite free their hearts from trouble. But He who cheered them when the shadow of the great coming sorrow was

darkening, cheered them yet more fully now that the sorrow had passed away. The still lingering shadows of doubt and distress vanished when He, not only entered and said, "Peace be with you," but *shewed them his hands and his side*, and, breathing on them, said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

"We have seen the Lord!" said they to Thomas when they met with the sad unbelieving man. Perhaps he only shook his head. "We have indeed seen Him!" said they.

"Did He *shew you his hands and his side?* was it really He? how *could* it be?"

"Yes; *He shewed us his hands and his side.*" What an impressive and sufficient proof had the Apostle missed seeing! Vexation and self-reproach together made him, however, say what it must afterwards have grieved him to have said, "Ah, but unless *I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side*, I will not believe." He who by his own fault fails to get the evidence he might have had, asks for more than there is any need of! He missed obtaining what was enough; and so he asks

more than enough! "Oh, Thomas!" we say; and that is perhaps all his brethren could say. They were displeased, even offended. Why should he distrust their testimony;—why indeed! However, Jesus had so recently breathed into them the spirit of forgiveness that they would not be severe with their friend. Besides, as there were some who at first believed not for joy, so here was one, they felt, who believed not for sorrow. They knew his heart was true, though his faith was small. So they took care that Thomas should be with them that same day the following week; for Jesus might visit them again. He did visit them again. And, at once, the Lord offered to Thomas the very proof he desired. The distrustful man, who would not credit the united testimony of his brethren, nor even trust his own eyes without his finger and his hand to vouch for them, was permitted to have all he asked for.

And now faith filled his heart as with a rush, and brimmed over in the memorable exclamation, "My Lord and my God!" As if he had said, "Yes; as Thou didst tell me, Thou *art*

the way: as Thou didst tell Philip, Thou *dost* shew us the Father. My Lord,—guide me by Thy counsel on the way of life. My God,—receive me into Thy glory when my course is done." Thomas feels as one who, if the signs be but shewn him that can make him believe at all, can then believe everything that is to be believed. If once, in a matter so great, he can believe *anything*, he can believe *everything*. If his Lord really has come back to him, He is no longer "Lord" only; in Him he sees the Father, and can say, "My God," also.

We must not treat him harshly whom Jesus treated gently. In him the triumph of faith was delayed only that it might be thorough. Think rather how fully he now believes than how slowly he came to his faith.

But what says the Saviour to him? "*Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!*" As he heard these words, perhaps Thomas said in his heart: "Henceforth this blessedness shall be mine. Last week it might have been mine, for I only heard of that which the rest saw.

How happy had I been could I have then believed! But having now received this great 'sign,' henceforth I will live by a faith confirmed by sight, but not dependent upon it."

How are *we* to take these words of Christ? Do they commend those who believe without having seen? or do they, as it were, congratulate them on being able to do so? They teach us to regard such persons as both happy and approved. But they do not imply that it is well to believe without evidence; nor that the sight of that, which nevertheless we believe without seeing, will not afford us peculiar joy. Happy, how happy, are they who see the good days, the good fruits, for which they have long waited. He indeed is blest who trusts an absent God; but how blest is he who opens the door when at last it pleases God to knock thereat as a visitor! They were blest who could calmly believe, when Peter lay in prison awaiting death, that God would provide for his servant whether in death or by deliverance: but how happy were they to find Peter standing at the door, and to know that their prayer was an-

swered! "Blessed are *your* eyes, for they *see*," said our Lord to the disciples. Not thus blest were the righteous men and prophets who had desired to see. And yet to these holy and faithful men belonged the very blessing of which Christ spake to Thomas. They *believed* that God would do great things for Israel and the world, that a glorious time was coming; but they knew not when God would work, and only very obscurely, how. They believed that God would make of the wilderness "a garden," and in the desert would give "water springs;" but they did not *see* these happy changes, nor know the time and way in which they would be effected. These men were approved of God; and they were happy as well as approved: for often by faith alone were they rescued from the despair into which others sank, and many of their days were passed in peaceful hope.

It is, then, both blessed to see what you have believed in, and to believe in what you have not yet seen. But faith without sight is only blessed if it be indeed warrantable, and have respect to something great and heavenly. Readiness to

believe is not necessarily a virtue. We regret that men should be credulous; we cannot honour credulity. But if we mark why credulity is to be blamed, we shall the better see why faith is to be praised. Why do people readily trust in foolish schemes that promise to give them wealth without work? Because they are so eager to get money; because they think more of gain than of duty. Their credulity shows the quality and strength of their desire. Their hearts "go after their covetousness." And he who readily believes in Truth, when he hears it, shows the quality and strength of *his* desire. His desire is pure, unselfish, elevating. He hears Christ's "speech" because the affections of his heart enable him to understand his "word." The "word," the doctrine, is, in its sense, its promise, its proposal, congenial to his heart; and therefore he is a ready and believing listener.

"But may not the love of Truth induce a man to listen to a false teacher who says he has it, just as the love of money induces another man to listen to a deceptive or nefarious scheme?

We may commend the desire of the one and reprehend the desire of the other; yet both may be credulous—may they not?"

The man of purer disposition is likely, from the first, we answer, to have the clearer judgment. But, at the first, it is chiefly in *disposition* that the two differ. Each may yield more faith than he should, and so be deceived. But he who seeks what is *true* finds his judgment continually becoming a safer friend; while he who seeks only what is *pleasant* to *him*, bad though it may be, finds his judgment ever a more ensnaring foe.

"Must we not, however, discriminate between our belief in outward things that are alleged—events, occurrences, 'signs' of one sort or other, and our belief in goodness and truth themselves?"

Certainly we must. And it is neither to a man's honour that he should believe without sufficient evidence, nor that he should want the lower kind of evidence when he has once had the higher.

Our Lord said that those who rejected Him

had no "cloak for their sin." Why? Because He had done among them the works that no other man did. Unless they had seen these works, there would have been some excuse for their unbelief; when they had seen them, there was none. These "works" were open to strict repeated scrutiny; yet was not Christ believed. Why? Because they hated Him too much to give due heed to his miracles; they barred their hearts against the influences of these mighty works. A man may love money so much that you cannot persuade him to distrust falsehood, and hate real religion so much that you cannot persuade him to trust truth. But the apostle Thomas *had* trusted in Christ; he knew how holy, how sincere, how kind He was. *He*, therefore, should not have insisted on the lower evidence, having had the higher. His heart should have assured him that his senses would bear witness to the thing he desired to believe, if only they had opportunity; but he should not have insisted on the opportunity.

Outward evidences, then, are serviceable; and with honest, thorough, scrutiny should they be

examined. But when Truth is once trusted on its evidences already shown, spiritual *and* outward; *then* we should be prepared to believe without seeing: for have we not seen enough to make the full vision we desire sure, however long it may be delayed? Thomas's trust in Christ should have made him ready to believe in His resurrection as soon as he heard the news; it should have quite prevented his insisting on a fuller proof for himself than had already been given to his friends. But the mercy of God often grants what we ask, even though we ask too much.

Here, then, we may give a short summary of the instruction our Lord's words convey. Happy and approved are they who so confide in God that though they have not seen what others have seen, and cannot yet see what they are told they shall see, yet their faith fails not, and their hope is steady. Happy are they, for they know whither they are going, and the way they know, though the end is not in sight, and the way seems to be the wrong one. Approved are they, for such "believing" could not be theirs had

they not well pondered the evidences given, and seen with the eyes of a pure heart the goodness and greatness of God revealed in His Son.

Once again is Thomas mentioned. He is one of Peter's fishing party in Galilee when the plentiful draught of great fishes is taken. Nathanael is with him, seeing "greater things" than had yet been seen in Galilee. James, John, Peter, these two (*i.e.*, Nathanael and Thomas), and two others unnamed, form the party. "Who were the two unnamed ones?" Wherefore ask we after their names? Had all the seven names been given, we might have fancied that more importance attached to the selected Seven than to the completed Twelve. But it is well that Thomas is one of these, and pleasant to find him one. Christ will give him "evidences" even in abundance! Guileless Nathanael, do not think hardly of Peter for his unfaithfulness: see how tenderly your Lord deals with him. Incredulous Thomas, what is there you may not expect to see, what you cannot wait for, now that you have seen and dined with your risen Lord?

Do the eyes of our heart see the King in his truth? Let us wait believingly, and our outward eyes shall see the King in his glory. Have our outward eyes beheld some things put under Christ, some evidences of his power on earth? Let us wait believingly, and we shall see all things put under Him, and the earth filled with justice and love. Have we believed "unto salvation," yet not received the salvation? Let the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts keep those hearts—and our eyes, too—still expectant. Do we see some things that baffle and confound us? Let us look away to those other things which assure us. Have we been blessed with the sight of some things that others have vainly desired to see? Let us add to this blessing that of the man who sees less than others yet believes, on their testimony, and the guarantee of his Lord's character.

Here are three blessings, and they all may be ours. *We see*—the plain sure evidence of glorious truth, even the truth that Christ is our Saviour. This is the first blessing; let it introduce the next. *We believe*—that all things

are possible to God, that not one of his good words shall fail, that none can pluck us from his hand: neither seeing "signs," nor successes, as we would, we nevertheless believe. And this second blessing shall introduce the third. *We shall see.* Living by faith, we wait for the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; for the beautiful glory of the last, the happy, day; for Christ coming to be admired by those who love Him; for the Paradise of God, with its trees and bloom and fruit; for the City of God, with its order, wealth, and grandeur: for the satisfaction of our souls when we wake up in the likeness of the Son of Man, and see Him as He is. Then may we say, "As it was in the beginning so it never more shall be. Sorrow and doubt are gone."

Prayer before Sermon.

O THOU who keepest promise, and whose promise is as great as it is good, increase our faith. Not with an evil heart of unbelief do we approach Thee, but with a heart which, by faith, Thou art purifying from its evil. Yet, Lord, how far are we from having a heart so pure that it can always see God, a heart so free from evil that it can believe nothing but good of our heavenly Father. Thou art our Father, and wilt still acknowledge us to be Thy children though we shew ourselves to be distrustful of Thy love. Many sons and daughters hast Thou brought unto glory; and Thou hast brought them every one to believe in Thee, to believe in things not seen as yet, to walk by faith and not by sight, yea, to trust Thee when they were as blind.

Patient hast Thou ever been, O Lord, with Thy children. Thou hast set a value on them all; Thou hast had a blessing for them all.

O that we may feel we too are dear to Thee, and that there is a blessing for us also. Shew us this day what most we need to see. Comfort us out of Thy Word, that Word which is truth. And if any of us have said, "Why should I seek the Lord? is not his service a restraint?" O shew us that Thou art seeking us, and that to save us from shame and bitter disappointment. May our unbelief be unbelief in the world. May we wisely distrust the world while Thou callest us to hope in Thyself, that our distrust may not, suddenly or at last, become most wretched and most hopeless. Dost Thou not call us to glory and virtue? Is not the hope Thou givest one that can never shame us?

In Thee, if we have believed, would we now believe more fully; sure that Thou wilt give us what Thou hast promised, wilt shew us Thy wonders and Thy glory; wilt make us happy even on a sad way if it be the right way; and wilt lead us through the rocks, that seem to have no outlet, into a broad country, peaceful and fruitful.

O Lord, if we have not believed in Thee, may

we repent of our unbelief and live, live by the powerful hope of faith. For who can be sufficient for himself? Thou art our sufficiency. Our heart, touched by Thy truth, moved by Thine appealing kindness, yearns for a purity, a fulness, a steadfastness such as it has not, and cannot have but from Thee. Draw near to each of us, by Thy Spirit, in Thy Son, as Thou didst once, by Him, visit the world. To us, let his invitations of mercy to sinners, his words of compassion, his warnings, his comforts, his lessons of wisdom, be addressed anew. May we feel that what Thou wast in Christ to the first disciples, that Thou abidest for ever. By Thy Spirit dost Thou abide with Thy Church, for its furtherance of joy and faith. And how can we have joy and peace in believing, unless we know Thee as Saviour of Sinners?

We believe that Thou canst, and that Thou wilt, make us clean. We believe that Thou canst, and that Thou wilt, keep us from perishing by the evil that is in the world. We believe that Thou hast given one Man, even Thy beloved Son, to die for the people. It is Christ

that died; yea, rather, that is risen again. O that our sin may die through his death. O that our soul may rise through his rising. Live in us now, O Lord, live more abundantly; live in our care, our constancy, our courage. Live in us by Thy Spirit, and work in our darkness as flame works to change its fuel into warmth and brightness. Create in us those virtues that reveal Thee. Nourish them, for they still depend on Thee. May all that we have teach us to trust Thee for all that we need or expect.

And, O Thou who knowest that to ask the best things is to ask hard things, not because Thou art unready to give, but because we are unready to receive, patiently help us to prepare for receiving Thine own grace, and trusting Thine own word already given. May we share the blessing of those who have not seen, and yet have believed. Enable us to love Him whom we have not seen, that, when we see Him, our love may be perfected. Is anything too hard for the Lord? The hard things we ask Thou canst grant, if only we still wait and pray, and watch and endeavour. So may we

do, that, being followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promise, we may come at last into our rest and joy, through the mercies of Jesus Christ, our faithful Saviour. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

O THOU who didst love and keep Thy disciples, keep us, we beseech Thee, that we fall not through weakness into unbelief. Shew us evidently that Thou art ours, and hast spoken to us, and wilt make good Thy words. To some Thou speakest in their sorrows; to some, in their joys; to some, by Thy skill and power in nature; to some, by Thy providence in history; to all who read Thy Word by its simplicity, its heartiness, its righteousness, its pity. Truly we all see something of Thy truth and glory. O that we may discern more of these in what Thou givest us to look at. But may we wait for the vision of Day till the Night be past; and believe Thy voice that we hear, while as yet we cannot see Thy form.

Help, we pray Thee, all who are weak in faith. Encourage all who, conscious of defect, have feared Thou wouldst reject them. To each Thou hast given a talent for culture, and assigned a

weakness for trial. May the thorn in the flesh cause us to give more earnest heed to the revelation made unto our spirit.

Lord, we remember all who, having the like trials with us, need the like mercies; all to whom life is hard, and faith sometimes harder. O do Thou, when they believe, help their unbelief. So convince, so overpower their doubting heart, that they may cry, My Lord and my God.

O that now, with peaceful conscience and a tranquil heart, we may again betake ourselves to rest, thankful for the Day and its quiet and its lessons; and desiring, when we awake, to be still with Thee, and still followers of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

Third Service.

Lesson:

Isaiah xii.

Luke xviii. 9—xix. 10.

Mark x. 46—52.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 16 Hymn, 1 Book.

9 Hymn, 1 Book, vv. 1—3, 7, 9, 10.

The Rivulet, 16 Hymn.

III.

CHRIST'S VISIT TO JERICHO.

April 10, 1864.

"*And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.*"—Luke xix. 1.

"'What sound do I hear of a multitude treading?
Who is it that passes? Ah, would I could see!'
'It is Jesus the Prophet, who round Him is shedding
The sunshine of mercy.'—'Then why not on me?'"

WHY not? Call to Him. "O, no; how can He hear my voice amid the noise of all these trampling feet?" But try: who are you? "A beggar; a poor blind beggar!" Call aloud, then. "O, no; He is busy speaking to those near Him. I shall but feel that I have called in vain, and my heart will grow darker than it is." But *try* if you cannot make Him hear: call again and again. "O, no; He is

passing by: He will soon be gone!" Then call *at once;* call aloud: call louder and louder, and again and again. He will never more come this way, no, never.

Jesus was going up from Jericho to Jerusalem, where He was to fall among thieves, who would strip Him of his raiment, and wound Him, and not be content with leaving Him *half* dead. O, how many helpless friends would be glad "to pour in oil and wine!" but they can only pour out their heart in tears and sighs. The "thieves" will prevail—the men who rob the people of the knowledge that should be theirs; who rob Christ of the love that is his due; who rob God of the honour due to the message of his Son; who rob Israel of the hope Messiah brings them: these "thieves" will very shamefully handle Him who is now passing by. He has been on the other side Jordan, in safe retreat from his enemies for awhile. But He has now crossed over Jordan; He is on his way through Jericho, going up to Jerusalem to "receive a kingdom." He is fifteen miles from the holy city, and will very soon reach Calvary.

But blind Bartimæus only knows that *He is passing*. And his conduct is in exact contrast to that of the man of "weak excuses" whom we have imagined. "What is the noise?" asks Bartimæus: "who is it?" "Jesus," they say. And at once he cries, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Hush," say some; "hush,"—not liking the loudness of the cry, nor the shrill sad tone of it. But Bartimæus only cries the louder. Misery often makes a great noise in the world, a great and displeasing noise, if it can but get opportunity to make its want and its woe known. Surely, happy people should be ready to bear with the disturbance a little time; for Misery has perhaps had to bear its sorrow a long time.

People could not always come at Jesus without effort, even when He was on earth. Those who had already come to Him sometimes hindered those that would come. There was a heathen woman who sought Him that He might heal her daughter. *She* cried to Him. And the disciples did not at all like the noise, and said, "Send her away." There were mothers who

desired his blessing on their children. But the disciples were for sending them away too, as if their Master was far too great a man to be troubled with little children. It is the same in these days as in those. If you want to get near Christ, to hear the truth from his own lips; if you seek a blessing that can only be had from Him as He personally notices and cares for you, you must be in earnest, and neither heed the crowd of men nor the group of disciples. Let your desire prompt your effort, and your effort be sustained by your expectation; and your expectation of good to be bestowed on yourself, let that be quickened by the testimony of others as to good bestowed on them.

When blind Bartimæus heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he did not say, "Who is He?" He had heard by many of the Man that went about doing good, but had never thought perhaps of his coming to Jericho. Faith works in him at once, and he does what a man who cannot use his eyes should do—use his tongue. *This* we can do in the dark—*call for a light*, if perhaps there be any who will

hear the call. Man's darkened soul can *call* for a light when it cannot *strike* a light. Alas, how can a blind man pierce his veil of darkness by an intense wish to see? But the spiritually blind man can utter a loud and exceeding bitter cry that shall pierce heaven, and enter into the ear and heart of God.

Jesus of Nazareth stands still, and commands that the blind man be brought to Him. And though some had just been saying, "You must be quiet, and not make such a noise as this," now others said, "Be of good comfort, rise, He calleth thee." Possibly even some man who had said roughly, "Hold your tongue!" now said, "Well, well, come; the Prophet has stopped on his way and calls for you." *So* he might speak, softened by the Saviour's kindness. People that know what they want, and will take a course that is plainly natural and right, get allowance, and sometimes respect, and sometimes even help, from those who at first were displeased with them and opposed them.

The blind man throws aside his garment and goes to Christ, many out of the crowd no doubt

offering their hands to lead him. His soiled, perhaps tattered, garment will only encumber him. Give him his sight, and he will not care even to look for this garment any more, but will find a better. He will wear a garment of praise instead of a garment of heaviness, the garment of a pure new life instead of the old earthworn sin-soiled dress. People that have their eyes opened will at the very least get their clothes *washed*. A neat, decent, dress is often an early sign that a man is becoming careful who has hitherto been reckless. And new talk, new tempers, new estimates of things, are garments of the spiritual man, that show he has become *a new man*.

Jesus commends the blind man's faith, and opens his eyes. He did not say to him, "Ah, Bartimæus, thou art eager to look, like other men, on this various world; but one thing is needful, even a pure heart that can see God!" Mingled with the blind man's very natural desire to see was a strong confidence that Jesus could bestow sight on him. He cried, he cried aloud; he came eagerly when Christ stood

waiting to receive him: all this was *faith—the earnest pressing of the soul toward God.* And Jesus gave him his wish because of his trust. And then only can nature's wish be fully granted when spiritual trust in God makes us fit to be recipients.

But *when* was this cure wrought? was it as Christ entered Jericho, or as he left it? Matthew tells us of *two* blind men whose eyes Jesus opened as He was *leaving* Jericho. Luke tells us of *one* blind man to whom Jesus gave sight as He *entered* Jericho. Mark gives the one blind man's *name,* and says that the miracle was wrought as Christ *went out* of the city.

Mark's account is so particular that we feel sure *Bartimæus* had his eyes opened as Christ *left* the city. There *may* have been two cases of healing, one as Christ entered, and one as He left, Jericho; but there is no need to assume there were. Let us conjecture that the facts stood thus: There were *two* blind men who, as Matthew says, received their sight as Christ *left* Jericho. Bartimæus was the more prominent of the two. His was the louder voice;

he was the better known, the more earnest and believing: it was he that cast aside his garment. And of him only had particular mention been made to Mark, who therefore speaks of only one blind man. Luke, who had heard of the miracle, and to whom also only one man had been mentioned, had understood it to have been wrought as Christ *entered* Jericho, and so relates it before his account of the visit to Zacchæus—to *him* the incident of special importance, which he alone reports.

But if any man says, "I will not believe in the miracle till I know for certain about these two blind men," we reply: "Very well, friend, then you are blinder than either of them, and must stay in the dark till you are tired of it." The narrative is as evidently *true* as it is evidently *inexact in detail*, or incomplete, not therefore incorrect. And the spiritual impression it makes is quite independent of the little discrepancies in statement.

It is with Christ's *visit to Jericho* that we have to do. He has been lodging there, and has

met with some spiritually blind people who, we hope, now think better of Him than they did yesterday. He has been the guest of Zacchæus the publican. Could He have found no better host than this notorious man? Every one in Jericho knew who *he* was—a little man who had done much better for himself than many bigger people. Some liked him, some feared him; but all the respectable and religious folk of the neighbourhood held aloof from him. He had altogether lost place in society; not even riches could raise him. In this city, where there was a good trade in balsams, and so a good revenue to be collected for the government from the trade, the chief of the publicans was likely to be a rich man; but he was but a publican after all.

Now it was to this man's house that Jesus went; and there He spoke a parable about the king and his ten servants. But how did Jesus and Zacchæus meet? This, Luke tells us. The ants are a little people, but they are exceeding wise. People that want size must make up for it by sagacity. A short man up in a tree is

really taller than the tallest man who only stands on the ground. Happily for little men, the giants have seldom any great wit. Bigness is not greatness; and yet smallness is in itself no blessing, though it may be the occasion of a man's winning one. It is not pleasant to see every one about you a bigger person than yourself. And this is a sight many do see who are not dwarfs *in stature*. But Zacchæus was a dwarf in stature; and, notwithstanding, had become a man of consideration. But they called him "Zacchy," or even "little Zacchy" sometimes no doubt; and rich as he was, and firm hold as he had on many people, he was far from happy. Though small, he was strong; but then, though strong, he was sour. He despised the religious people, and yet did not like to be despised by them. Many men knew he was cleverer than they, but they never forgot he was shorter!

This man could not come at Jesus for the press. Though not a blind man, he had his difficulties in seeing. But he would very much like to see Jesus, what kind of man He was.

People pointed *him* out, and said, "That's Zacchæus; isn't he a little fellow?" The short man felt a curiosity as to the personal appearance of the famous Prophet. We may be sure Zacchæus had heard good things of Jesus Christ. And he was soon to hear good words from Him, words more healing, more fragrant, than the Jericho balsams. Zacchæus had gone on before. You must get at your tree, before you can climb it! He makes haste, runs, climbs, for he is very eager in this business; and he not only sees Jesus, but, what is much better, is seen by Him. If a man looks for God, God knows that he is looking. He that seeks is sought. Take trouble to win a blessing harder for you to get than for others, and you shall have one bestowed on you better than you sought for. Nathanael under the fig-tree, and Zacchæus up in the sycamore, are both observed. It is well to be sometimes *under* a tree, musing in its grateful shadow; and it is well to be sometimes *up* in a tree, looking forth on the passing crowd or over the wide country.

Zacchæus sees the crowd coming. He hears

the hum of voices, the stir of feet. He sits back, hidden, as he thinks, in the thick foliage. "Which is he?" he asks himself, as the crowd comes nearer. He puts out his head, and draws back again. He is not sure he should like to meet the eye of the Prophet. Shall he catch a word of anything Jesus may be saying? *That* he would like. "They are very near now! Is *that* Jesus of Nazareth? Yes, that must be He. How very unlike a scribe! and yet not like a publican either! What a manly man! How kind, and how simple! Something of a woman in his face, too; but no weakness. He looks tired though. How I should like to entertain Him! But it cannot be. No one would ever think of mentioning Zacchæus to Him." And here Zacchæus feels very lonely. The wind sighs through the tree; he sighs with it. A few minutes more, and the crowd will have passed; Jesus will be gone. "Well, I am glad to have seen Him." And as he says this, he is still looking at Him through the leaves; when, suddenly, Christ's eyes meet his own. The Saviour has looked up. Jesus of

Nazareth is looking at Zacchæus. What a clear inviting eye! He speaks: "Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." *To-day!* to-day *only?* Zacchæus is as eager to come down as he was to climb up, and welcomes his self-invited guest.

But there is always somebody to spoil joy, or to meddle with it. "Zacchæus, indeed!" they say: "if He is going *there*, *we* shall not go with Him!" Respectable people! consider whether you are not more sinful than this "sinner." And, at least, consider this: If you separate yourselves from every one that you think can do any harm to you, you separate yourselves from every one to whom you can do any good. But, you good people, which of you has thought of doing any good to Zacchæus? How comes the man in whom you feel no interest, to feel so much interest in the Prophet you would fain, if He be a true Prophet, keep to yourselves? A worldly man is a man *not mended;* a religious man is often a man *spoiled in the mending.* The publican knows that he is a sinner; the Pharisee only knows that he

was one, and does not know that he *is* a worse one than even once he was.

So Jesus goes to the publican's, to the rich man's house. For Jesus is not afraid of consorting with the rich lest people should say, "He cares too much for money," any more than He is of consorting with the poor, lest they should say, "He cares too little for respectability." He will dine with a Pharisee, if invited; and He will dine with a publican, even uninvited, if the man's heart be indeed a guest-chamber. They say, "He has gone to *a sinner's* house!" Yes, He has; and on a righteous man's errand. We are sorry you are angry, good people; but we cannot heed your anger.

To how many houses must Christ invite Himself, if He is ever to be a guest therein! Much that we cannot *ask* of man, we are, O so glad, if any wise and friendly man will offer. Sometimes what we have need of from God, we do not even wish for; but sometimes what we greatly wish for, we dare not expect. Christ has both to make Himself desired as a guest,

and to persuade those who already desire Him that He is most willing to come.

He comes now to the house of Zacchæus, a pleasant house perhaps, with a palm-tree beside it, and a view of the neighbouring limestone mountains and the ascending path to Jerusalem. The delighted publican, as he stands before his guest, in the presence, no doubt, of many friends, and some neighbours not often visitors of his, says: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." But does not this speech of the publican's a little remind us of the Pharisee who said, also standing: "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I acquire?" Consider the difference. Zacchæus has just heard the general murmur against him: *a few* led the murmur loudly, perhaps, but "they all" joined in it. It is as if he pleaded thus: "Indeed, Lord, I am not what I might seem to be from these men's murmurings. I do not live without care for others, nor deal unjustly." And our Lord did not reply, "Zacchæus, I

must plainly tell you that you cannot be saved by works of righteousness such as these." He knew the man's heart, and that his words were not those of pride, but of modest appeal.

"But what does Zacchæus mean? that he will henceforth give half his goods to the poor, and restore fourfold what he has unjustly gained? or that he already does so?"

That he does so. This publican had, perhaps, been one of John Baptist's hearers. Many of the Jews who supposed themselves very religious persons would think of a baptized publican only as if he were a washed negro. The negro may be a little cleaner, but he is just as black as before! Zacchæus may have been leading a reformed life for some time; yet can he not get the respect to which he is entitled.

"He gives half his goods to the poor. Was he under any obligation to do so? are we?"

Certainly not; nor to give half our time, or half our thought. But there have been men who have given the chief part of their time and thought to the poor: and as there are so many

who give the poor *none* of their time, or thought, or money, is it not well that there should be a few otherwise minded? Is money more precious than time and thought that a man should not give *that*, if so inclined? Zacchæus was so inclined. And were a man in our day to spend half his fortune in promoting the comfort, education, health, virtue, and piety of the poor, would not his name be fragrant both in earth and heaven? But there are very many people who cannot give half their goods to the poor, for they have not as yet secured half enough for the wants of their own household. Let these, then, give time and thought.

But besides his charity, there is Zacchæus's *honesty* to be considered. He speaks as if he had not been always honest. If he had not, craftily, made a larger claim than was right, he had sometimes, possibly often, made one careless whether it was exactly just. "You have taxed me too heavily," it had been said to him sometimes. "That's what you are to pay," he had answered roughly. "But it's more than the due!" "Pay it at once," said Zacchæus.

Roughness breeds roughness; wrong engenders wrong. The publicans collected tolls, rates, imposts of various kinds, for the foreigner—for the Roman government. People evaded payment when they could. What! a Jew pay his tax readily to his conqueror? No Jew ought to pay if he can help it; still less be a collector of taxes imposed on his brethren! Would Englishmen who should collect the revenue for some Napoleon that had conquered us be very popular? would they deserve to be? But the Jews *had been* conquered; that was the fact, let them disguise or deny it as they would. And when things had come into a settled state under the Roman rule, it was useless folly to spite the men who collected the rates, who, in many cases, must do that or starve. Doubtless the publicans were often provoked to dishonesty by attempts to defraud them of their due, and avenged themselves for the disrespect shewn them by extortion. *Zacchæus* had not always made his claim justly. He confesses it; but he does more. Of his own free will he restores fourfold when no one could have compelled him. Indirectly, it is

suggested that his extortion had not been great; for the law of Moses enjoins that for an ox five-fold restoration be made, for a sheep, fourfold: and Zacchæus was the man who, had he made any largely unjust, *ox-like*, claims, would have restored fivefold.

Most kindly, most wisely, does Jesus treat him. "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." So speaks our Lord. And Zacchæus was not "sore displeased" at being spoken of as "lost." He does not say in his heart, "Lost! does He count me no better than lost? Many of the poor about here would be 'lost' but for me! And, though the Jericho people do carry their heads so much higher than mine, the one end of my purse, that I keep full for myself, is heavier than both ends of theirs." No such foolish thoughts as these had Zacchæus. True, as he had not been able to add cubits to his stature, he had been glad to add coins to his store. But the word "lost" expresses very exactly what he feels. He stands, as it were,

outside, is cast away, disregarded; he has not found true peace, does not know the way to true happiness. Spiritually, he is still in the wilderness. He cannot find the joy he would; and no love, such as would fill his heart and bless it, seeks after him to "find" him and comfort him. O, Zacchæus! you have sometimes said so; you will not say it now. You little thought this morning that "salvation" would pay you a visit before night. Did you feel, as you rose, that you wanted more love than you would ever get, and say, "I must go and do a little good to the poor, and so cheer myself, though they are but thankless, too many of them?" Love Himself has now come to see you; Salvation enters your house, and, as it were, fills it.

"Salvation! How? where? What does Christ mean when He says, 'Salvation has come to this house?' Did He preach 'the way of salvation?' If so, we should like to hear what He said."

Well, He said this:—That the Son of Man had found the son of Abraham, acknowledged

him as such, and would make it well with him. And was it not salvation from anger, and sorrow, and hardness of heart, to be thus acknowledged? Men of Jericho, this is a son of Abraham; *your* blessing is *his*. Society may reject him; but the God of Abraham accepts him. The sons of Abraham may ban one another; but the Son of Man will bless them all. "Son of Man" is a wider and deeper title than "son of Abraham." The Son of Man's love includes all Jews, because it extends beyond them all. Christ acknowledged Zacchæus in a way very comforting to his *Jewish* and his *human* heart. But *this* was the salvation—*The creation of a living bond of affection between Zacchæus and that Holy Love in whose presence he stood.* In this Presence Zacchæus felt at once that he grew purer, happier, stronger for good, forgiving to those who had despised him, and humble and thankful in that sense of forgiving confidence which Christ's whole manner towards him breathed.

When Christ spoke of "salvation," then, He was Himself the salvation of which He spoke.

He stood in that house a shining Light of Love; and whoso would might rejoice in the warmth of it. He was "the way;" and Zacchæus began at once to walk therein. Here was the best poor man that ever Zacchæus had entertained, and He had brought more wealth into the house than Zacchæus had ever dreamed of. All that the reformed Zacchæus had ever done was but as a *preparation* for salvation. And now it comes to him, not in words of moral commendation or reproof, but in that holy and noble brotherly love, in that power, so pure yet so inviting, so brave against narrow men and yet so meek and wise, which, in Jesus Christ, had become his Guest and Friend.

But perhaps some one has been saying, "This story of Zacchæus, is it dignified enough for the Bible? A little fat man runs on before a crowd and climbs up into a tree just like a schoolboy; and that is put into the Bible!"

Well, it is; but not just in that way. There is no drollery in the narrative; but there is simplicity. Happy he who does retain in middle life some of the activity and enthusiasm of the

schoolboy. Happy, too, the schoolboy on whose imagination the simple, pleasant, but holy, stories of the Bible take early hold. The Bible is not prim, and it is powerful; and the naturalness and reality of its incidents greatly contribute to its power.

If some one else then should say, "Is preaching about Zacchæus preaching the Gospel?"

O, yes, we reply, it is. Whoever examines and enjoys a Scripture story feels that he is brought nearer to God. He feels the holy goodwill of God, and is drawn by it. *Notions* about religion may grow up in people's heads as hair grows on them—without any feeling. There is some comfort when the too heavy crop is *cut*, and you get rid of the weight; and the cutting does not hurt you. But whatever, innocently interesting the mind, fills the heart with pure affectionate feeling, serves for edification. The Evangelic narratives *domesticate* "the Gospel" in our souls: the dignified Truth becomes affable, yet remains dignified; and we love what we revere, because it is so familiar with us. It does not *stoop* to be familiar. No stoop-

ing is needed. Parents do not feel that they *condescend* when they kiss their children. It is natural to do so. As it is sometimes necessary and right to be very grave with children, so it is necessary and right that some Scriptures should be awful, others difficult. But it is quite natural and very useful that there should be much homely and simple narrative. This makes us feel that "salvation" comes to the *house*, even though we are *little* people; and does not merely wait in the Church till we go to it.

Prayer before Sermon.

GOD of our fathers, Thy mercy has been known from ancient days, and endureth for ever. Thou didst take David from the sheep-fold, and didst make him king. In the time of his transgression Thou didst hear his cry of shame and sorrow, and purify and heal his heart, that sin had wounded. Thou didst give to him, the sweet singer, songs even in the night of his grief for sin. We thank Thee for all Thy mercies to David. But how shall we thank Thee for David's Son and Lord? for Him who was separate from sinners, and yet visited them in his pure compassion? for Him who was, and ever shall be, the Good Shepherd of the Sheep? for Him whom Thou didst try, and perfect, with all sorrows, and then anoint, with the oil of gladness, King for ever?

Enable us now to rejoice humbly and heartily in Jesus, the Son of Man, the Lord of David, whose glorious day father Abraham foresaw

with joy. Assure us that his forgiving mercies, and kind care, and royal protection, may be ours. Shouldst Thou raise us among men, how know we what sins would mar our work, and shame our prosperity? Should men cast us away from their friendship, how know we but that, in the bitterness of our heart, we might forget our God, who Himself casts away none from his mercy and his favour?

Be Thou, Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer, our Sunshine and our Shield. O that, if Thou givest us any place and power for good, we may be saved from David's sin by our discipleship to David's Lord. O that, if we are sad for want of human love, if we feel as "lost" though we have gained much, if happiness still fly from us because we have not found God, Thy salvation may visit us with its blessing.

We come this night worshipping, pleading, giving thanks, making supplication. Lord, if we bring to thee a tired heart, refresh it; if we bring a sad heart, cheer it; if we bring a true heart, speak of Thine own faithfulness. Alas, our heart may be but blind: give us then

spiritual sight. What man can breathe, and his breath not sometimes be a sigh? who can feel, and his feeling not sometimes be a smart? Our knowledge shews us our ignorance; our work, our weakness. But Thou, the Fashioner of hearts, knowest us all. Thou despisest not the sigh of the *contrite*. Thou rejectest no man who, in his necessity, comes to Thee through Thy Son. We come, but not with sighs alone, nor with confessions alone, nor with supplications alone. Yet, Lord, accept all these. But accept, too, our adoring homage, the joyful triumph of our spirit, its congratulation of itself because of Thy known and plenteous goodness.

And to Thee, whose pity is as large as Thy wisdom is deep, we come with intercession also. For the poor and the wandering; for those burdened with toil, and those beguiled with pleasure; for little children and those who stoop with age; for the newborn and the departing; for the cottager in the still country, and the artisan in the noisy town; for those who watch in chambers, or toss on their bed, and those who are in the dark field of war; for

the prisoner, for the traveller; for merchant and mariner; for kings and their people; for men of all colours and conditions; for saint and sinner, —we make intercession. But who is sufficient for this great prayer? What mean we but, looking forth upon a world too vast, too varied, for our heart to know, to say, The Great Good Lord take his own world under his own mighty and merciful care! Can we love, can we care for, Thy creatures more than Thou dost? God of all, Saviour of all, make us partakers of Thine own sympathy and charity. And be with us now, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

LORD, we thank Thee for Thy holy and Thy friendly Word, so pure, so pleasant, to simple hearts. Thou makest even its least verses as cells in the honey-comb; and our eyes are enlightened, our heart strengthened, with the honey.

Lord, we have our houses: wilt Thou not visit us? may we shew that we wish Thee for a Guest? Let us not say, "By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" knowing that Thou canst raise the lowly and prosper the depressed. Yet let us not hope in the successes of ambition, nor trust even in the rewards of diligence. For we are "lost" till Peace and Truth have found us, and brought us their blessing. What though we should climb a high and fruitful tree, if we have no view of Christ therefrom?

Lord, if we have raised ourselves above ourselves that we might have a view of Christ, may

we descend at his word, sit at his feet, gladly receive Him to our house and heart. May that which is as the Pharisee in our hearts meet with that which is as the publican; and may they both hear kind reproof and receive a free blessing.

Son of Man, we are men; and but for Thy mercy and truth we are "lost." This day may "salvation" come to us from Thee. Strong and tender Lover of Mankind, to know Thee, and God in Thee, to be of one heart with eternal Love, this is eternal life. O may that life be ours in its pure and satisfying abundance. Amen.

Fourth Service.

Lesson:

Romans xii.

Luke xix.

Matthew xxv. 14—30.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 46 Hymn, 1 Book.

The Rivulet, 2 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 51 Hymn, 1 Book.

IV

THE PARABLES OF THE POUNDS AND THE TALENTS.

APRIL 17, 1864.

> "*And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*"—Luke xix. 11.

NEAR as our Lord now was to Jerusalem, there were more miles between Him and that mountain-city than there were days between this visit to Zacchæus and the "lifting up" upon the cross of shame and yet of glory. Jericho was fifteen miles from Jerusalem; but, probably, there were not ten days between this happy hospitable day and that great day of sorrow. And yet, if ever the kingdom of God seemed coming, it was now and the few following days.

Christ was accompanied through Jericho by an admiring and delighted throng; and though a cloud rose to lessen the brightness, and a wind moaned that seemed to threaten storm, yet He left Jericho amid the praises of the people. Our Lord's visit to Zacchæus the sinner, the chief of the publicans and therefore, as the men of Jericho thought, the chief of the sinners, darkened their faces;—this was the cloud: with their voices they murmured against Him,—this was the moaning wind.

But Bartimæus was very happy; we are sure Zacchæus was, and many publicans beside. He who had been blind "glorified God;" you could see it in his eyes: but his tongue was not idle, nor his feet either; he followed Christ. And so, accompanied by new friends and old ones, amid much popular joy, the Saviour of Sinners and King of Israel leaves Jericho after speaking this parable. And He does but leave it thus triumphantly to enter Jerusalem in a yet more triumphant manner. Luke, who cannot help letting us see in his Gospel the delight he found in writing it, tells us that when Christ, having

climbed the road to Jerusalem, was now descending the Mount of Olives into the city, "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen."

But, O, Bartimæus, must we warn you not to follow your Benefactor too far? How can your new eyes bear the spectacle that awaits them at Jerusalem? O, Zacchæus, what will you say when you hear that He who spake in your house of saving the lost is Himself lost? Will you think of the parable about "a nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return?" If ever there was a man who deserved to be named Nobleman, your Visitor was that man. But—return? how can he return? when did the grave give up its dead? Has not one of your own poets said, "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave, or Thy faithfulness in destruction?" One of your kings too, when he thought he must die, said sadly, "Death cannot celebrate Thee."

But in a little time Zacchæus learned that Death *can* celebrate Jehovah's glory, that the dead can arise and praise Him. For Jesus has returned; and now that He has returned, will not "the kingdom of God immediately appear?" that is to say, will not the kingdom be at "this time restored unto Israel?"

Ah, but here lies the mistake—Zacchæus's mistake, it may be, but certainly that of many others:—If the kingdom be but restored to Israel, then the kingdom of God is set up in the world! O, no: how can the Jews rule over men, if God does not rule over the Jews? Of what avail is it to be rid of the strong power of Cæsar, if you are not rid of the stronger power of Satan? Will the men who killed Christ, at once begin to love Him for the very things which made them hate Him, if, now that He has risen, He will invite them to places of honour in his Kingdom? They may indeed enter his kingdom; but they will have to enter it on their knees, making confession of their sin—enter it as little children, ready to learn all things anew; enter it to be made pure,

not to be made powerful; enter it to wait and to work for its glory, not at once to feast, and to boast as well as feast.

The praises that greeted Christ at Jericho, and, still more, those that greeted Him on his entry into Jerusalem, must have cheered his heart. He knew what was in man; He knew the people's weakness; but He also knew "the love of many," yes, *very* many. There is a prophecy in the honest shout of thousands and tens of thousands. Christ wept when He beheld the city—the doomed, the beautiful, the beloved city. The "hosannas" were in his ears as the tears were in his eyes. The thousands of Israel were around Him. His heart was very full. "O Jerusalem! O, poor, poor, people!" Here are praises, plentiful and very hearty. Surely the kingdom of God is at hand! surely this is its appearing! Here are the palm-branches; can the battle have *yet* to be fought? is it not already won? Here is enthusiasm like a flood: now let Christ, as a noble ship, borne on the flood-tide, enter his haven; let Jerusalem be his rest. But He weeps; the

great Visitor weeps! And these people, though they be thousands, what can *they* do? So numerous, so hearty, yet so helpless, so necessitous:—alas, poor people!

And yet their shout is as great in its sense as in its sound. It is prophetic of God's kingdom, though it tells us not, nay, hides from us, what must first be, ere that kingdom come in its power. It is a prophecy uttered by Love itself. The Spirit of God works in the hearts of these thousands, and they hail their Saviour, though they know not how He will save them. *Him they* cannot save; but He can save them. And their love, that cannot save Him from dying, may yet help him to die, and so to save them. The great emotion of these closing days of our Lord's career, the great gladdening emotion, helped Him doubtless both to teach as He did that last week, and to die when the week was ended. Despise not the honest praises of a crowd. If an "huzza," or even an "hosanna," be but as a bubble, the bubble, that is hollow, shews the play of fine true colour. Do not think of the hollowness only, but of the beauty also.

The bubble will disappear, the hosannas sink to silence: but the great solid world itself shall one day shine all around with those colours of the heart that have glistened in its praises. And then, when Love shines everywhere, and in all its varieties, the kingdom of God will have come indeed.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Why is Thy "chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of the chariots" that accompany Thee? Hast Thou not sped well? When shall we see the "divers colours," the divers colours on all sides? Lord, let "Thine enemies perish; but let them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

He Himself said it! Yes, at the close of the parable spoken in the house of Zacchæus, He said that the returning King would cry: "These mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." It is written, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword:" surely these words are spoken thus!

It is said that Archelaus, an Herodian prince,

who had built or greatly embellished the palace that stood in Jericho and was so well known there, had to journey to Rome to get his Jewish sovereignty confirmed by Cæsar; and that some of his Jewish subjects sent a message after him, praying that that man might not reign over them. Nevertheless, he received the kingdom, and, likely enough, remorselessly slew his enemies on his return. But if our Lord refers to the journey of Archelaus, and its success; shall it become the true King of Israel to "slay his enemies" as a Herod would slay? No, *as is the kingdom, so is the slaying.* Christ's kingdom is not of this world; nor is his slaying "of this world." *Literally*, indeed, must those suffer, even to destruction, who, after Mercy's perfect and patient work has done all that might hopefully and honourably be done, remain merciless, hostile to Love's citizens, haters of Love the monarch's sway. But, *primarily*, the "slain of the Lord" are those high, hard, dark, evil "thoughts of the heart" that have sent their "message" even to Heaven itself, saying: "We will not have this meek just Man, this unworldly

Prince, who loves *men* as much as Jews, or even more, who loves giving more than getting, who loves goodness more than all our glory,—we will not have Him to reign over us." *Persons*, who are under the dominion of such thoughts, are, in the primary spiritual sense, subdued and "slain," when their spirit is changed and they become new men in the Lord. They and their thoughts, the men and the influences that work in them, are to be overpowered by the glory of the returning Lord. The risen and returning Jesus will smite with *the "rod of his mouth;"* with *"the breath of his lips"* will He slay much wickedness, and subdue many wicked. His "eye shall see its desire upon his enemies." And his friends, how joyfully shall they see Him! how bountifully will He, out of the wealth of his kingdom, distribute recompenses to them! Let, then, no servant be idle; let none, confessing Him to be Lord, yet secretly think Him a "hard" Lord.

The Parable of *the Pounds*, here given by Luke, resembles the Parable of the *Talents*, given by Matthew; and it is far more interesting

to take these as twin parables than as merely various reports of the same parable by different auditors. Hearers *do* vary, always vary, in the reports they make of discourses they hear. If the discourse be important and graphic, the varying reports will shew how differently hearts were affected by what was spoken. And anything *very* interesting is likely to give rise to reports in which the agreements and the differences — or even discrepancies — are both very marked.

But the speaker varies his lessons as well as the hearer his reports. On old ground he erects new structures. He employs the same material in different ways. If a truth has two sides, he shews both, but perhaps not both at once. He may at one time shew us the flowering shrub in its flowerless state—speaking of the root chiefly; and, at another time, he may speak of flower and fruit. Wisdom, that steadies us by its consistency, pleases and animates us with its variety. How differently does a tree look when still, and when the wind blows; but no one will deny a tree to be itself because the free wind gives it a

new form. Often what are called "diversities of doctrine" are but as trees seen with the wind blowing, blowing perhaps to the peril of bough and of fruit, though the root is still safe.

But Jesus Christ, the Teacher, is calmly, safely, wise. We said these were twin parables. Together, they resemble one of those trees whose main trunk separates just above the earth into two equal towering stems.

Let us compare the Parables. In one, that spoken in the house of Zacchæus, *a Nobleman*, going into *a far country*, to receive a Kingdom, gives to his *ten* servants each a pound. The servants receive each the *same sum*, and it is a *small* sum. In the other, that given by Matthew, *a* wealthy *Traveller*, going away, also to *a far country*, divides his property among his *ten* servants, intrusting five talents to one, two to another, and so on, according to each man's ability. Here the *sums* are *large*, and the distribution is *unequal* in order that it may not be unjust. The "pound" mentioned in the one parable is to the "talent" mentioned in the other as a threepenny piece of ours to one of our

sovereigns. Five talents, then, is a large sum; in fact, about £800 of our money.

Now, observe of these two Parables, that the one is spoken in the house of a man who had much to do with money, and the other is recorded by such a man. Zacchæus was a publican, and so was Matthew. They were both much occupied with trade. And if the Fisherman has his parable of the net, and the Husbandman his parable of the seed, shall not the Publican have his parable of the pound or the talent?

Observe, too, that the smaller sum, "the pound," was best suited for the parable spoken at the house of Zacchæus. Till the "nobleman" be established as the "king," he has not much to give. He has his claim, but not yet his property. The Jericho hearers needed to learn that Jesus had but little to bestow; that He was not, nor was about to become, such a monarch as they conceived; but that there were duties which He would assign to his servants such as, though apparently of small importance, would lead them, if faithful, to

great honour. The parable of "the talents" was spoken to the disciples especially, and about a week afterwards. *They* knew more than the Jericho people could do what wealth their Master really had, and how great the trust that He would commit to his servants was.

But, apart from the suitability of the respective parables to the audiences addressed, we may see in the one, *the different use made of a good appertaining to all* set forth; and in the other the lesson taught, *that if the trust is proportioned to the ability, so also may the gain be proportioned to the trust.* In the first case, ten men have each a pound: with one, this increases tenfold; with another, fivefold; and so on. In the second case, ten men have a large sum distributed among them according to their ability; and each man's allotment may, and in several instances does, reproduce itself; the five talents become "other five," the two, "other two."

From all this we learn, that the least thing God gives us may, to the industrious, be prolific of blessing—it may multiply even tenfold: and

that the greatest thing God gives us may not only, by use, yield us something additional, but may, as it were, throughout its whole extent, in all its parts, gain a new value — it may be doubled, add another self to its first self. The doubling of what is entrusted to a man "according to his ability" may represent more than the fivefold, or tenfold, increase of a particular deposit. If, for example, a man has a small income, such as barely suffices for necessaries, to double his income may be to increase his happiness even fiftyfold. Whereas if a farmer sows his fields, and at harvest time they yield thirty or sixtyfold, he is not therefore even twice as rich a man as before.

We may, in fact, be always working according to both parables,—increasing our particular stores according to their natural productiveness; and enhancing the value of *all* that we have by wise regard to the whole; we may be multiplying our "pound," and doubling our "talent."

In another way, too, we may be acting in the spirit of both parables. For the one shews the *different* use made of *equal* means; and the other,

the *equal* use made of *different* means. We may determine that what we have in common with all men we will employ to better purpose than some do; and that what we have as specially our own, whether it be less or more than our neighbours have, shall be at least as well used as some of those neighbours are using their gift.

In each of the parables we hear of an *idle* servant, who becomes his master's accuser. His case is made prominent. We are especially warned not to be like *that* man. He receives a pound—as much as others do; but neither he, nor any one else, is the better for it. He does not squander it; none of the servants are represented as doing that. He has conscience enough to take care of it, but not conscience enough to labour for its increase: he would rather not have been burdened with it. If Religion is not a blessing to a man, it will certainly be an anxiety. If Truth is only ours to be watched, and not to be used, our life will be a dull one. The man who knows he has a soul, and wishes he had not, is unhappier than he who is ignorant of this

great, this ennobling, fact. The fearful servant spends more time perhaps, and suffers more trouble, in watching lest any one should steal his "pound" than he would have done in converting it into two, or even five.

And unfaithful idleness will engender hard thoughts of God, so that at last the idler comes to feel that God expects what is impossible, or asks what is unfair. There is a fear in which love is at work, drawing us toward what we fear, that we may presently have delight in its greatness and our connection with it. But there is also a fear of which dislike is a secret and strengthening element. He that dislikes *work* will dislike *God;* for it is God who has set him his work. To a bad servant, hard *work* always makes a hard *master*. He thinks of the work, and has hard thoughts of the master; but the good servant thinks of the master, and has pleasant thoughts of the work. What is really hard becomes easy, what is really easy becomes hard, according to the temper in which we are working. And if, through unfaithfulness to duty, we get hard false thoughts about God,

we shall not even do what is consistent with the fear we profess to have of Him.

But we must notice this idle servant as he appears in the two parables. That he should complain when he has as much as others, we cannot excuse. But when we find him with *one* talent because his ability is small, may we not say?—"Poor fellow! if he had been more gifted, he would have been less tempted." We should like the case to be given of one who, having but a single talent, by the more diligent use of his small ability, made it five; while abler men gained less, or gained nothing.* There *are* such cases. Some of "the last shall be first." But the Parables of the Talents and of the Pounds are, in fact, very generously constructed. How much better this man may be than that, is kept out of view.

We *all* may make an *equal* use of our *differing* abilities. Let not one be puffed up against another: what have any of us, that we have not received? But let no man be an evil-hearted,

* "The Parable of the Pounds, however, involves this lesson."—Marginal Note, by Mr. Lynch.

unfaithful, idler. The most gifted have *their* special temptations. But let the least gifted not be the least active; let him not make that an excuse for indolence which should be a spur to effort. He is not expected to do much; but he must do something, and he *may* do even much. If he is the weakest in the group of servants, he is not despised as the least. Some of our Saviour's sternest words are aimed against those who despise "little ones;" and this title may be given, not only to little children, but to learners, to the immature, the timid, the weak in mind, the lowly in estate, the feeble in strength.

Our Saviour said of one, "She hath done what she could." May we be so happy as to hear such words spoken of us! He also said of another, "He that is forgiven little, the same loveth little." Our sense of the mercy extended toward us will increase our ability for the Divine service. But the unfaithful servant's case in the Parable of the Talents does teach us this, that *if we might have had* more ability, it would have been well to have had it. And the ability of Christ's servants depends upon the

hearty use they have made of the advantages they have already had. These ten servants to whom the Rich Traveller entrusts his goods are not men *newly hired.* They have for some time been his servants; and the least able might, in fact, have been more able if he had been more diligent, and might have received a larger trust had his love given a fuller warrant. We learn, then, that if our ability be small through our neglects, even a trust with which we are honoured may be a snare to us. We must be "diligent in business, serving the Lord" while He is with us, lest, on his going away, we receive only so small a charge that we feel too indignant to be faithful even in that. The idler talks of exaction; the undutiful, of injustice; he who has wasted his time considers himself wronged by the want of time; he who has cause to fear God's anger is angry with God.

The slothful servant is also called "*wicked,*" that is, evil-hearted, malignant. Wasteful idlers have even vindictive feelings against industry and the industrious. The heart cannot love God unless it does the work of God. If we

are wrong in practical life, the less we do, the more we shall murmur: *God* will *seem* unrighteous, because *we are* unrighteous; and we shall bear a secret grudge against Providence, which favours other people and neglects us! And the man who cannot do as well as others, and will not try to do as well, will not let others help him. Where there is little sense, there may be much pride; and he who cannot employ his talent to advantage will not even let another employ him and it!

At last, the Parable represents the slothful and wicked servant as speaking out his foolish mind to God; that is to say, his real thoughts are at last disclosed: and he is, as it were, judged and condemned on his own terms. "God is an unjust, grasping, inconsiderate Master—is He? He expects to glean where He has not strewn; He expects sheaves without seed-corn, bricks without straw, or even clay? *This* is what you say. Yet you have done nothing whatever to satisfy this Master's demands; you offer Him neither increase nor interest; you hated your work, and were too idle even to

think of the consequences of your own idleness; you were too discontented with your lot to consider how the use of the pound, or the talent, might better that lot. O, thou wicked, thou foolish, servant!"

In drawing to a conclusion, notice the following points: (1) The "*pound*" had been kept in a napkin—to shew sometimes, as people keep a Bible in their house to let us see how religious they are. But the very brightness of the Book proves how little it is read. It is kept for the respectability of it, not used for the love of it. The anxious faithless keeper of the pound had perhaps sometimes talked of his fellow-servants "*risking their pounds in that way;*" adding, "*I take care of mine.*" But spending is better than hoarding; and the risks of a trade sure to be on the whole gainful are better than the formal guardianship of that which, kept to the last, is then lost, and which, while kept, is of no use. If the servant had said, "O, my Lord, my abilities are small, and the dangers and dishonesties of trade great; I dared not risk thy money; but, O, I was so careful of it when

violent men were abroad!" the reply might have been: "Thy loss should have been thy gain, since thy venture was in My service." Courage may well be urged when Christ guarantees success. We must not affect humility as a cover for cowardice. We are appointed to be, not watchmen only, but also workmen.

But while the "pound" was wrapped in a napkin, the "*talent*" was hid in the earth; put out of sight because it was out of mind; a precious thing made worthless, because abandoned to be useless. Within how many a man's *earthiness* is there a talent hidden, and *hated!* The man is no vicious squanderer; but gold that you cannot get at, good that never comes forth, are as if they were not.

(2) Notice, secondly: The pound and the talent are taken away from the unfaithful servant, and given to the ablest of the group. Let the man who is ablest have what has been wasted. Let all, in their proportion, receive to their care the advantages which have been neglected, and employ these for themselves and for us.

(3) Notice next, how it fares with the different servants when the King and the Master return. Those who had been faithful are all commended and rewarded. The King shares his kingdom with those who had been faithful to him in his poverty. They have gained pounds, and they receive cities. The Master receives those into happiest intimacy with himself who, in his absence, have been faithfully industrious for him. These good men enter into his joy. He delayed his coming; but they continued their labours. They said not, "He will never come to reckon with us; let us make his goods our own; we have been busy, let us now be merry." The King returns from *a far* country; the Master comes back after *a long* time: but of the ten servants only *one* is described as unfaithful. And even this one, as the receiver of a "pound," loses *that*—and this is all; as the receiver of a "talent," he loses that, and is put forth into the outside darkness. Unprofitable man! there he must stay, wrathful and weeping.

"Outer darkness!" How expressively do the words represent both the state of man before his

soul's good is gained, and his state when that good has been lost! Who that has gained shelter, and is one of the many whose hope, whose interests, are one, who have light and warmth and sometimes festive music, would be cast forth again into the cold, dark, lonely night? We believe it to be *literally* true, that the punishment of many is *an outcast life* spent in darkness, in which the soul sighs for what it once had, but would not use, and says: "How long, Lord, how long? Is there any end—any day-spring—any hope?"

(4.) Notice, again: There are for each man *two* ways of gain; the direct and the indirect, *increase* and *interest.* Shall we wonder that Christ employs commercial emblems? Consider how extended, how still expanding, are the commercial interests of the world. Trade represents at once much that is basest, and much that is best, in man. In trade, man seeks himself and sacrifices his neighbours; and, in trade, man joins his neighbour, and they two become one for a greater good than either could win singly. In trade, man, a little lower than the

angels, is made a drudge scarce higher than a beast of burden; and, in trade, man, the hungry fighting animal, is made a diligent friendly being, with store enough for this world and leisure to think of another. In trade, the beauty of both heaven and earth is hidden by a cloud of gold dust, a cloud whose lurid darkness is worse than that caused by the yellow sand of the desert; and, in trade, the riches of the earth are unfolded and distributed, and the heavenly Father's love for his children is shewn in the plenteous stores He has provided for them, whence new, and still new, benefits are drawn.

How comes *increase?* It comes by the plenty of Nature, which enables us to add one thing to another, as gold to iron and wood; by the productiveness of Nature, which out of one seed yields many; by the application of skill to Nature, through which we extract, connect, and adapt Nature's gifts, and, first fashioning tools, then fashion many things. But all were to little purpose without combination. And whatever of ours another uses, paying us for the use, yields us *interest.* We depend for the increase of our

possessions on our connection with others, our combination with them. And we can always employ our "talent" indirectly, if we cannot directly; usually, we can do both. We can both sow a field and lend money to a farmer. We can attend to work of our own, and sustain the work of others. We can teach, and help, and comfort; and we can subscribe in aid of those who do such work of this kind as we cannot ourselves perform. And then, while our own work yields us *increase*, their work will yield us *interest:* yes, if we feel *interest in* it, we shall have interest *from* it; but, otherwise, we shall have none.

We need but add two "words:" one, concerning *the working;* the other, concerning *the waiting.*

What is it we have, and work with? We have a little knowledge, a little love, a little experience, a little money, a little favour with men, a little conscience, a little pity, a little time, a little opportunity: we have our *pounds.* And we have varying capacity and character—our *talents.* Assuming that we are already ser-

vants of the Truth, trusted enough to be tried, it must be shown whether, put upon our honour in this world, in the absence of our King and Master, we will diligently devote our capacities, according to the forms of our spiritual character, to the increase of truth and goodness in the world: it must be shown whether we will endeavour for a thorough, an universal, development and improvement of what we are and have, so that our talent may be doubled, and that for the pounds we gain we may receive the rule of cities. All endeavour, inward and external, yields spiritual profit according to the commercial law,—To much, more; they that have, and use what they have, shall get; things are added one to another, new to old, a seed becomes a store, and the worth and use of all things is more fully revealed.

As to *the waiting*. When Christ had spoken the parable at Zacchæus's house, "He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem." Steadfastly and patiently, He climbed the heights before Him. And *now* He rests, and yet waits. He calls to us, and commends us at any time of

success. He calls us—may it be to commend us! —at the time of our death. His reign is both real, and yet only preparing. He is present, and yet absent; away in the far country, conferring at Court about the heavenly crown, yet spiritually here, with us his servants. Do we believe that diligence confirms love, and that sloth leads to hate? Do we believe that to be "faithful over a few things," awaiting more, is better than to have full barns and an empty heart? Let us also believe that, though the kingdom of God may not immediately appear, it will come, come with Christ the King; and that, when He appears, we shall appear with Him in glory everlasting.

Prayer before Sermon.

O THOU, who didst long ago prepare the world for man, and art now, and hast long been, preparing man for Thy heavenly kingdom, to Thee we come. We acknowledge Thine eternal power and Godhead. Thou didst make man in Thy likeness; and, though we have come short of Thy glory, Thou hast not changed Thy first purpose concerning us. To be Thine in entire love, inheritors of Thy wealth, partakers of Thy wisdom, admirers and imitators of Thy work, is what Thou willest we should be. O patient God, Thine are the kingdom, the power, and the glory. And when, by Thy good Spirit, Thou hast conformed us to the image of Thy Son, we shall know what the glory of Thy kingdom is, and enter into Thine exceeding joy. Not in vain have we been born into this world, for not in vain has Christ died for us; and not in vain, therefore, can be our labour, for it is labour in the Lord.

O Father of mercies, of tender mercies, speak

now to our hearts of Thy perfect, Thy sufficient, good-will. It is indeed true that Thou canst not perfect that which concerneth us without putting us sometimes to painful trial. Thou canst not prosper our labour without making us taste of sorrow. But it is our profit that Thou seekest. And many good gifts from Thee gladden us, many kind words cheer us. Yea, we might even forget the God of the world in the joy of the world, forget the exceeding great reward in the joy of what our hand findeth to do and to gather. But it is not in Thine heart to curse our blessings. Thou art not displeased with nature's joy and nature's work. But Thou hast made us for Thyself, and wouldest have our every occupation hallowed by grateful remembrance of Thee: Thou wouldest have our life purified by love and compassion, our days made quiet and unanxious by trust in Thy providence. O Lord, help us to see the world as those who also see God; to use the world as those should use it whose spirits may have enduring riches; to work in it as those for whom Thou hast done a great work.

How busy is the life of man! how varied the rewards Thou bestowest on his industry! Thou hast made all things for us, and us for one another and Thyself. Teach us that the world, though a prepared place, requires a prepared people; that though Thou scatterest, we can have no happiest increase till, because freely we receive, we freely give; till Thy care for our body attach to Thee our soul; till all things have a savour of love, and a lesson of eternity, as well as a blessing for the passing day.

Thou hast not been sparing in Thy work for man. Thou hast made the holiest and friendliest Life also the saddest, that no poor man, no mourner, might perish for lack of sympathy. Thou hast also changed sorrow into joy, and made the worst that the Enemy could do, or threaten, a pledge of victory. We thank Thee for the Sign of the Cross; for the brotherly tears of Christ; for all the meaning of that dark night followed by so calm a morning, of that sharp trial yielding so strong a consolation. Shall we be idle when Christ was so busy? Shall we be busy for ourselves only, when He was busy for

us all? Shall we work only with our reward in view, when He worked with death between Him and his joy? Shall we but moodily persevere when He, whose right it was to reign, was comforted in his friends, though the world rejected Him?

Teach us to make much of even a little good, and to make little of even much trouble. Deliver us from a murmuring and an idle heart. Ours we know is the kingdom, for it is Thine, and Thou hast given it to Thy Son for us. He is the Heir; therefore shall we live with Him. He waited; and we would wait. A body Thou didst prepare Him, and by the Eternal Spirit did He live to Thee. And Thou hast appointed to us our place; Thou hast given us our work; and our times are in Thy hand. By the Spirit of Christ in us, may we work as He did; not vainly expecting the advent of our glory while our tasks are uncompleted. If we wait for harvest as husbandmen of earth, so would we wait for the soul's blessedness as husbandmen of heaven. Shall we wait for earth, and not wait for heaven? Lord, may Thy kingdom come; but, O, that we may never go from Thee be-

cause Thy kingdom hath not yet come. May our ability be increased by our industry. And at any time when Thou leavest us to ourselves, trusting something to our ability, may we shew ourselves faithful to Thee.

Lord, we pray for those we love, for those whom Thou lovest. We give Thee thanks for household and personal favour granted to us, and to all. We remember the discouraged, the toiling, the bereaved, the sick. God of mercy, prosper every effort to reclaim the sinful and enlighten the dark. Prosper such efforts here.

God of Nations, bless our own land, and send forth light and liberty into the world. O Thou who, having ten servants, givest hope and work to all, forgetting none; so hast Thou dealt with nations, so with churches, so with souls. May we be Thine, not in general citizenship only, but also in special service. Bear Thou rule over us, and as servants may we become friends; setting that joy before us into which we may enter when Thou comest, bringing Thy reward with Thee.

O forgive our sin; O receive our prayer: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

O LORD, who art ever at work around us, having made all things for service, the earth hides Thy riches, but yields them to our search; the sea, so great and wide, is full of wealth, and Thou dost freely give us of its plenty when we cast the net: Thou art the Inspirer and Rewarder of industry. What pleasure do we often find in bodily work; what joy in its prosperity! And it is work of Thine appointment, pleasing to Thee in its strength and skill when our mind is just, and our good-will to others, real. All things are full of labour. Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening. Again to us the evening has come, but not after a day of nature's toil. Have we this day wrought anything in Thee? have we sought to know the truth? have our thoughts been active and just? have our prayers been sincere and hearty? O Lord, if it be thus, Thou art our Rewarder, Thou our Reward.

None can seek Thee diligently, and fail to find Thee. To Thee our wants and our powers alike are known. Supply our wants, encouraging us in every good work; admonish us concerning our powers. Let us remember that Jesus Christ for our sakes became poor, yet laboured for our good and made many rich; that He left his throne, and took upon Him the form of a servant. May we therefore be wise, and accept the work, and the humiliation, which Thou hast appointed.

Hast Thou not given to all life? hast Thou not given us Thy Word? We would make a gainful use of Thy precious common gifts. And each of us would in love serve others. Let the mind of Christ be in us; before us may his joy be set. And though the kingdom of Righteousness and Peace is not yet with us in all its order and beauty; may we never say in our hearts, The kingdom cannot be his; it is another's: He will return no more; the earth is *not* the Lord's.

Lord, the earth *is* Thine; and according to Thy Son's prayer, and work, and wisdom, so shall its state be. His sufferings plead; his

promises comfort; his example teaches: and we, His servants and Thine, would be faithful in a few things, that we may enter into his joy, and be blessed in our deed.

Accept our worship, and bless this service to our welfare, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Fifth Service.

Lesson:

Luke x. 25—37.

2 Corinthians x. 7—15.

Philippians ii. 4—11; and iv. 4—23.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 116 Hymn, 1 Book.

Rivulet, 52 Hymn, from v. 3.

Dr. Watts, 113 Hymn, 1 Book.

V.

LOVE AND SELF-LOVE.

APRIL 24, 1864.

"*All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*"—Phil. ii. 21.

"*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*"—Phil. ii. 4.

WHAT are "the things of Jesus Christ," that any man should regard these things rather than "his own?" Does not "nature itself" teach every one of us to regard his own things?

Clearly, Nature does. No one blames a thirsty man for drinking water, or for labouring to procure it; but we bless the man who relieves another's thirst, having taken trouble to do so, especially if he himself is thirsty. Nature prompts living creatures to supply, re-

fresh, and take care of themselves. And if we look out on the busy scene of creation, and note how the birds and the beasts attend to their own affairs, we shall perceive that they work together to fulfil God's ends, by working severally to fulfil their own. One bird builds its nest on the rocks, another in the tall trees, another in the grass, another by the brook-side. The swallow sports high in the air, and finds its insect food there. The hawk ascends to scan the country for his prey; the lark, to fill the country with his song. All these creatures and a thousand others have their several abilities, their corresponding affections, and their uses in the Divine scheme. They do their own work, being taught of God to do it; little they know of the work of others. But they do not live to themselves, though they regard only themselves. Each cares for his own things. But there is One who cares for the things of them all; and He *so* cares for the things of all as to make them contribute to the welfare of one another.

There goes on around us, then, work according to a very manifold activity, and yet it is one

work. The tiniest of the animal races knows what pertains to it; the mightiest knows no more. And yet these creatures, even the most savage of them, can love. The bear robbed of her whelps, though she is a bear, is grieved and very angry. The animals fondle their young as well as feed them. Dogs befriend one another. And creatures who do not pair for a permanent life together, yet show a happiness at pairing season that is like the flower of their existence, remaining but a short time, but recurring again and again. There are, too, in Nature many societies. The rooks dwell together, with a life that is not always quarrelsome because it is so noisy. Ants and bees live in societies, though the ant works in one way, and the bee in another, and they understand not each other's doings. But ask the sparrow-hawk to spare the sparrow, the owl to spare the mouse, the blackbird to spare the worm,—will they understand you? Ask the fox to pity the farmer's wife, and not steal her hens: will you persuade the cunning thief that it is right and good to leave off thieving? He may perhaps tell you that

they who hunt the fox should let the fox hunt the poultry. But even if we spared him, he would not spare them.

Here, then, are lessons that a view of Nature teaches. (1) Creatures do "seek their own things;" they live and work according to their implanted desires: but they only find the things they seek because there is a Great Friend of them all who has provided these. (2) Creatures, in "seeking their own things," promote one another's good, though they seek it not, because the Great Friend seeks it through them. (3) Creatures, though thus "selfish," yet do not live one caring only for one; they have desires toward one another; they associate in pairs, in groups: and they help, and even pity, one another. (4) Yet creatures, in their various kinds, are ruled by their desires, and cannot rule them or vary them.

O, man! which wouldest thou resemble? some one, the most gifted, of these creatures? or the great God, who has given gifts to them all? Thou art thyself the most gifted of God's creatures, and also the most wretched, if thou

knowest not the "special gift of God." The special gift is that of "a spirit" which makes thee blessed in the deed of thine that blesses others.

Nature in us is a seeking desire. The more varied and numerous our desires, the less peace and the less prosperity, if there be no ruling affection to harmonize us: the more nature, the more strife. We must transcend nature in order to receive its blessing. The ruling affection in us must be a love like God's love. He concerns himself with the general well-being; with Him, to supply happiness is to enjoy it, the spectacle of happiness is a source of happiness. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

"But, then, *He* is infinite; and as He looks on his creatures with infinite survey, so can He regard them with infinite sympathies: *we* are but finite!"

Very true. We seek knowledge, not omniscience; we attain improvement, not perfection. We cannot love as God can; but we can love with an affection inspired by Him. Shall a rain-drop say, "Because I am not the ocean,

therefore I am not water?" Why then should a heart say, "Because I am not infinite, my love cannot be divine?" Man! thy love *can* be divine, it *must* be divine, if thou art not, from a king of animals, to sink into the slave of a fierce nature thou canst not gratify.

"But might we not as well look to a lamp in hope it would begin to burn, as talk to the natural heart in hope it will begin to love divinely?"

Consider that Nature, as we have been speaking of it, is not undivine; and man partakes of the blessing that all creatures receive naturally. Have animal affections and animal actions some testimony to the Divine goodness in them, and do they yield pleasure? Men's affections and actions shall much more, even under rude conditions, bear witness to God; and to himself, concerning a richer joy and a more constant operation of love than he yet knows. We touch the lamp with fire, and it burns; we touch the heart with affection, and it too, though we knew not it was prepared, may burn also. Even to reason about love often excites strange strong

workings in the human breast; and as by chemical workings dark substances often burst forth suddenly into flame, so by spiritual workings that dark substance, the heart, breaks forth into love.

We do not cease to be *selves* when we become like God. Were we all like God, the word "selfish" might indeed come to have a new and beautiful sense. We should *then* be selfish when we were attending with all diligence to what it was given us specially to do, and when we were enjoying with keen grateful pleasure what it was our neighbour's special joy to provide for us and to see us receive. An angel, made perfect in brotherhood, tastes with his own mouth, sees with his own eyes, feels with his own nerves, and attends to his own business. He is a *self*, and his abilities and sensibilities are specially his and not another's. But his delight not only comes to him in full flow from the willing propulsive hearts of others, but its special keenness and zest are caused by his sympathy with their joy, and realised in his contributing thereto. That interests should coalesce,

and hearts find in other hearts their most precious treasure; and "property" be another name for the heart's receptive power of good, so that he who is richest should be himself the best part of other men's riches;—these are characteristics of a state *conceivable.*

"But can it be *actual? how* can it be actual? If, in the obscurity of our mental twilight, we strive for the sight of such a perfect society, do we get more than a shadowy glimpse of the 'City of God?' If, in the yearning of our hearts—angry often, like neglected children, only because they are so hungry—we muse on this perfection of mutual love, does the intensity of our desire yield us hope, like a thing becoming so hot that it bursts into bright flame? How are the foxes, and sharks, and bulls, and bears, and hawks of mankind to transcend nature, to suppress its evil, and to express its energies and abilities in quite new, in beneficent, ways? How are we to take the rankness out of self-love, and yet leave its strength? Suppose a man acts toward his neighbour as reason shows him that love would prompt him to act, will that

love burn on when it becomes plain that, though he loves his neighbour, his neighbour does not mean to love him?"

Here are questions; they press for an answer: they accumulate, and we might add to them till only the great blaze of joyful hope, that rises when we apply the torch of spiritual truth to the pile, could make our large statement of the difficulty seem a wise one. But we remember how Elijah enlarged the difficulty that the glory of God might be the more manifest. He knew there was a God who would answer by fire; and he had no fear lest the fire should prove a weak fire. Let them add, then, to the sacrifice much cold, cold water. Many waters cannot quench love; and cannot love consume the waters that cannot destroy it? 'Tis a very stony world; but the fire of God can melt stones. What though cold water and hard rock confront God? What though indifference and insensibility oppose Divine Love? They cannot conquer it; it can conquer them. The difficulty *is* large; but He who deals with it is mighty, yea, almighty.

"All" men "seek their own:"—what are we

to do? what say? Will it avail to say, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"?

Our help, our hope, is this.—*God* has sought *us*, has looked on our things. The fire of Love in Jesus Christ has already "licked up" much of the cold, cold water, and melted much of the hardest rocks. And therefore we may learn of Him to look on our neighbours' things as well as on our own, on the things of Christ rather than on our own.

"What *are* the things of Jesus Christ, that any man should seek them rather than his own?"

What are the things of Christ! They are *our own* things; they are yours, they are mine. He is the Liberator, the Benefactor, the Physician, the Shepherd. He is Divine Love. No man can raise himself above the level of nature so as to find delight in doing good, so as to find satisfaction in suffering from evil that good may come, unless God draw and assist him. What powers we have are His powers; and though we have a spirit, free in its quality, it has no strength that suffices it to work the will of its

freedom. We must go where Nature draws, or drags, however unwillingly, unless God help us. "*O, our God,*" for the very statement of this truth wrings a cry from us, "*help us, help us!*"

It is to help that Christ came. He brought the love that can kindle love. He gave pledge of the supply of that Spirit whose perfect work He illustrated, whose deep heart He satisfied. Into the equity, the considerateness, the self-restraint, the self-sacrifice of genuine love God alone can raise us. And He *will* raise us as we *will* to be raised. There is a working of God on men to effects which we cannot but experience; but *this* working is that we may be incited to seek help, and put forth endeavour, in order that God may work His perfect work upon us. To some, whose life He has already influenced, He has nevertheless to say, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

Consider: you cannot sever the interests of Jesus Christ from those of the world. There is nothing that can be his without our being the better for it. He asked nothing for Himself that was not for us also. He would enter into his

Father's eternal glory, that we might see it and share it. Thus Christ's things are the world's things; Christ's life is the world's true life. It seems otherwise. There is much in which man rejoices that the Spirit of Christ seems to exclude, nay, to smite so that it withers away. There is much which the world pursues that the life of Christ does not, in an outward sense, include. But *Christ is the inward rectification of the life of man*, the pure strong germ of the new heart within the big, rough, old one. When the busy energies of the world are ordered "according to the love of God in Christ Jesus," nothing will pass away but that it may exist in a nobler form; nothing will be excluded by the laws of *spirit* that appertains to the *nature* of man. Though all that appertains to the nature of man did not *outwardly* appear in the life of Christ, the life of Christ, as He was and is, will *inwardly* appear in all departments of this nature. *God in Christ, is Christ in the world; and Christ in the world, is the world in God.*

It is true "the things of Christ" seem such things as these,—poverty, disrepute, sighs, tears,

and the cross: and these are not things to be *sought.*

"Much pain and want are to be had without seeking!"

True; but a reason for them, and a benefit by them, are not to be had without seeking, nor, always, by seeking. But Christ makes these so his "things" that they become new things.

"But were it not well that God should show us a beauty that should captivate every heart, reveal Himself in a prosperity every one might share, open a fount of happiness of which it would exhilarate every one to drink? Let Him discover Himself in a supreme and shining Happiness, and 'Son of God' be a name of glory throughout the earth!"

It *is* a name of glory. The things of Christ are the things of the world purified. The very things of which we say, "Were it not well that we should have them?" are the things God gives us, but gives us, and can give us, only as nature's self-love becomes love indeed, love divine. What do men seek naturally? They seek pleasure; they seek praise; they seek

advancement; they seek possessions; they seek safety. And, in seeking pleasure, they hurt one another; in seeking praise, they envy and hate one another; in seeking possessions, they impoverish one another: in seeking advancement they oppress, and in seeking safety they even sacrifice, one another. But Christ sacrifices *Himself*. And yet, pleasure, praise, wealth, dominion, and security are all in the gift of Love, in *his* gift. Obviously, Self-love is poverty in comparison with Love: for let all its sensibilities be enumerated, and let them all be satisfied, it has no joy in the sensibilities of others and *their* gratification. Whenever we see a truth, and are glad because its light shines for all; whenever we feel a joy, and it is to us the sweeter because diffusive like fragrance, *we love*. Studies that make us wiser are cherishers of liberality and benignity, because they introduce us to truths that concern and that bless multitudes. Life, as appetite, is strong indeed. All men know it. Let us but conceive, then, our longing for the virtue of others, and its accompanying joy, to be as

strong in us as any one of Nature's appetites, and what enrichment to ourselves as well as benefit to others! And this is love. Love makes all things to be to us, according to our limited relation to them, as the universe of his own good works is to God. His delight is in them. And as one who found pleasure in the healthy growth of all the plants in his garden, would, were the plants conscious and their healthy beautiful growth an expression of their peaceful joy, much more be happy in their happiness; so does God delight in giving joy to his intelligent creatures, and in perceiving their joy. And we, through love, possess the good of all whose well-being we are capable of appreciating. Love is the mutual joy of giving and receiving: we love, and are happy; we are loved, and are happy. That it should please others that we are pleased, pleases us the more. Meat, that we count savoury, pleases the palate; but the more, if dressed by one who *intended* to please our palate. God made us that He might delight in us, and we in Him; and that we all might delight in one another.

Why, then, O why, our hungry woe! Why our mind so barren of good-will! Why are we so baffled of one another instead of blessed! Truly, God has given us many substantial benefits. The world is one great meat-offering made by God to his creature. But even this was not enough, nor is it. And as on the ancient sacrifice wine was poured, to enrich and perfect it, so has God poured out a drink-offering, the heavenly wine, the rich sorrowing love of Christ, upon the world.

Who can show forth the secret resources of Divine Love in the work by which it seeks to win an answering love from us! Hadst Thou no self, O Lord Jesus? Yes, Thou hadst a self; and in the going forth of Thy compassion Thou didst consume, Thou didst sacrifice Thy *self*. Son of God, Thy name is great! World! bring all thy "things" hither, the things that seem true, seem honest, seem just, seem pure, seem lovely, seem of good report: bring them to be examined by the eyes of Love and purified by his spirit. All such things as these, that do not *seem* alone, but *are*, are Christ's. They are the

things which they who love Christ love. And what they will do and what they will bear to insure for these things regard, preference, supremacy, is the measure of their love to Him.

Did not our Lord, in dying, slay that in Himself, that is to say, in his flesh, which objected to the Cross, and would have refused it? He slew the flesh's coward love of ease, its dread of shame. And we call upon our souls and all that is within us to enter, by Cross-Gate, into the Paradise of God; to seek good strenuously, because it is good—and that means, not good for us only, but for man; not good in our eyes alone, but also in the sight of our heavenly Father. All strenuous effort that deals with refractory desires, and seeks to do well amid much ill-doing, involves pain. Love ever has sorrow with delight, and is perfected for its full delight by the sorrows it endures.

But let Paul himself now illustrate for us the power and quality of spiritual affections. He is writing to the Philippians: how did he become acquainted with them? In a vision, a man of

their country appeared to him, and said, "Come over, and help us." Was he not a disciple of the mighty Helper? Was not the Spirit of Love in him, ever guiding him where help was most wanted? So over the sea he went, to help the Philippians, and many besides. But what was gain to some was loss to others. Pious prayerful women received his spiritual help joyfully. But there were people in Philippi for whom Paul's power over evil involved the loss of what they called good. They had a girl in whom lived a clever wicked spirit, making her frame his house, and amusing himself by telling what he knew of fortunes, and matters of which men like to know far more than they need to know. This girl's masters made money by her. She was one of their "things;" and the money she brought them was another of their "things." What though the "spirit" in the girl was an evil one to her? it was a good one to them. Paul, however, cared more for her welfare than for their gains, and drove away the spirit. So it is, Love becomes an offender by doing good. For "the things of Christ" cannot be secured, by

those who need and will have them, without the things of many selfish men being imperilled. Truth and justice cannot do any great good without a great outcry being raised about the harm they are doing. So Paul, the "helper," presently found himself and one of his friends lying—very helplessly, as it seemed—in prison.

The jailer, a man who "minded his own business," only "looked upon the things of others" in this case, to make all as safe as might be for himself. But before the night had passed, he gained quite a new view of his own interests, and so learned to think of "his own things" as to think of his prisoners' welfare also. He began to care for "the things of Christ," for what was true, and what was right, and what was kind. Paul and Silas, with sore backs but cheerful hearts, were speedily free again. And the sorrows of spiritual love, whose course had not all run smoothly, greatly endeared Philippi and its converts to them.

Timothy was a partaker of Paul's work in this place, and a partner by sympathy in his sorrows and joys. And so Paul, now writing to the

people years after his visit, with Timothy by him, speaks of him as "like-minded" with himself. "Timothy has a genuine regard for you, ye Philippians, as I have myself. He feels toward you as a kinsman and a friend. You know him, by sure proofs, and so do I. But besides him I have none who feel towards you as I could wish. 'All seek their own.'" Not all men everywhere; he is speaking of those about him. Paul was now a weary heavy-laden prisoner at Rome; and but few of those about him cared heartily for the things of Christ. They have their own affairs to attend to, and are too busy, or too indifferent, to adventure on the troublesome errands that love like Paul's would find for them. The ardent weary Apostle thinks he would like to die and go to his rest with Christ at once; and yet he does not know: he would like to send good news of himself to his dear Philippians once more. Perhaps he may be able to do so by his friend and theirs, Timothy. They have been very kind to him; they, not a rich folk. But deep love can do much even when in deep poverty. They sent

him boxes or hampers, or "things" of that sort, containing very savoury meats and very reviving drinks, for all the contents exhaled the sweet odour of love. And a very loving letter is this that he writes them. "Kind friends! your messenger has been very sick, but he is well again. God spared him, and me in him; else I should have had grief on grief." Truly, the laborious devoted Apostle sends back fine "spiritual" things for their generous present of "carnal" ones. He exhorts to love, and humility, and care of one another, and forbearance with one another, and remembrance of Christ's great, hearty, and so tender sacrifice; and all in so simple and fervid a style that, if any of them read the letter by that riverside where prayer was wont to be made, they must have felt that the flow of the Apostle's love was as full, pure, and constant as that of the river.

In this Letter he gave up all the things he once counted "his own," to receive "the things of Christ." All that valuable Jewish property he had, as so select a descendant of Abraham,

he counted as nothing. To him, to live was Christ, and to die was gain—not the gain of this world, but a nobler. He would gain Love's great joy, entire union with what it loves best. But has he not his Master's spirit, though he does not see his Master's face? Indeed he has. And though he speaks of grief, and his tears mingle with his ink even in writing this loving letter, he calls on his friends to "rejoice in the Lord;" and presently repeating the exhortation, adds, "Again I say, rejoice."

How thoroughly interested is this disinterested man! Is such a phrase strange? Consider how accurate it is, how expressive it may be. His work—and that work is to tell the story, to offer the mercy, to reason on and apply the truth, of Christ—thoroughly engages his affections. And yet he has no secondary, no merely personal, aims. He is interested; he is disinterested. If we profess to speak of truth because we care for it, and our care nevertheless is only for what it will fetch in the world's market, we do not purely love truth. We may *value* secondary gains, but must be ready to

sacrifice them; but if we value primary gains, these, as our own, are indissolubly connected with the gains of others.

Whoever feels that man may be most interested where he is most disinterested, and that blessed is he who in this most resembles Paul, as he resembled Christ, has entered into the spirit of our sermon: in concluding which, let us suppose ourselves listening to the remarks of sensible hearers.

And, first, one says: "If a man, according to his ability and opportunity, seeks and does what seems to him best, avoiding in his work injury to others and their work, is he not promoting the general good, even though he thinks chiefly of his own?" Most certainly he is, we reply. Many people, not very selfish and yet not very loving, are the servants of Divine Love, doing much good, though not much caring to do it.

Next, another says: "Is not love of others, and the power of winning their love, a gift of Nature, like beauty or genius, which some have and some have not?" Most certainly, we reply, there is a special inborn lovingness which cha-

racterizes some men. "Nature," to them, is "grace." But this lovingness often withers for want of root or depth. Piety is the strength and crown of charity. An inner sense that God is love feeds that love for man which the world does so much to starve and grieve. Yet, no doubt, there *are* men who are more naturally lovers than others are: let us thank God for them.

A third says: "Is there not a missionary, aggressive love which only a few can display; and a quieter love which many, living as tradesmen or students, for instance, in an affection for truth or for business, may possess?" Yes, yes; we reply. As a man may be "faithful in a few things," so he may be loving in a few. Some show their love to many others; others show it rather to a few. Some, in direct love to many, are known as their benefactors; and some, in as real love to many, by their love of truth sustain and contribute to good feeling and good principles, though they live a very private life.

A fourth says: "Only *culture* will yield charity. You cannot 'speak the word' and the

selfish becomes the generous. You must be patient, and must modify when you cannot transform, count a little better than nothing, and remember that 'much' is made by adding together many littles." To this we reply, Thank you, friend; you speak well, and we will endeavour to profit by your words.

Yet a fifth says: "Much of the talk about love is very selfish, I think. People love to be loved; they want to be made much of, to be fondled and indulged. They also want to be thought feeling when they are only sentimental. Ask them for a shilling for man, or a sovereign for God: will they give you either?" As this person speaks, we say: Friends, you see what this man thinks of you: now is it true? If so, is there any hope that the last sentence of the sermon will do good?

And this is what we have last to say. The goodness of God is not an easy and prodigal good nature; the charity of the Gospel is not a tuneful tearful sentiment. God regards with intense unswerving affection all that is right, all that is perfect. His love to us implies that his

heart is set on having *us* right and perfect at last. And his Gospel is the good news of what He *is*, as desiring this, and what He has *done*, as procuring it. To love God is to hate and renounce self in its base form; it is to ally our spiritual self with Him, so as to combat nature in its perversions and overcome by "Christ who strengtheneth us." *He* stooped for all, but swerved for none. Not unconscious, as we must often be, of others' wants; not indifferent to any one's welfare; not opposed to others because of separate private aims: He consummated love for all in suffering for all, and did in very deed reveal that supreme Shining Happiness that the heart asks for; but He revealed it as a sun that waits to triumph, and triumphs most sweetly because of the dark rainy weather it has dispersed. Let *us* be less unconscious of, less indifferent to, less opposed to, others, because of Him who seeks the good of all. And let us partake the combat that we may share the triumph, and sustain the discipline that we may attain to the perfection.

Prayer before Sermon.

OUR Father who art in heaven, how great is Thy household; but Thou, in Thy care for all, neglectest none. How mindful art Thou of little things, whilst yet Thou wilt not have us forget that they are little. How mindful art Thou of us in our low estate; but Thou makest us feel that it is low, and sayest to us, Come up higher. And Thou showest us a glory and worth far above us, that our affections may be drawn upward. O that our spirits may behold Christ seated upon the glorious throne of Goodness, the highest of Princes and yet the lowliest of Men.

Gladly do we bow at the name of Jesus, for it is the name of Love. Lord, we reason of love; but He was love: we explore the sense of Love's commandments, but He poured into the wounds of the world Love's rich fragrant ointment. Though He was high, He became lowly; though rich, for our sake poor; though mighty, for us

He was despised; though happy, for us He mourned. But He is higher, and richer, and mightier, and more blessed through his humiliation. Give us, O Lord, the mind of Christ. And as He looked not on his own things, but sought our welfare, and ever did Thy bounteous will in seeking it; so may we study to love one another as He loved us all.

Lord, Thou knowest us; Thou knowest man. Thou, most just, most compassionate, most patient, art the Dispenser of good to us all, the Ordainer of our discipline, the Chastiser of our faults, the Rewarder of our endeavours. And as Thou makest things work together for good, so Thou wilt have men work together for good. Thou makest the things of one to be the things of many, and blessest most those who do most to bless. Oft, our neighbour is to us but as a shadow; to Thee, Lord, he is a man. Oft, we sadly feel that, to our neighbour, we have no value; but he and we are alike Thine. We would know the world, not that we may censure it, not that we may boast ourselves; but that our sympathies may be richer and more varied,

our prayers and thanksgivings heartier, our hope brighter, our work more like our Saviour's.

O Thou, whom Thy saints bless, who art tenderly adored by the sorrowful whom Thou hast comforted, and the sinful whom Thou hast purified, Thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The earth is full of the rich satisfaction yielded to nature's desire: but Thy heaven is full of spirits now satisfied for ever because Thy love is their perpetual joyful light. We thank Thee that we may work with Christ, in sure hope of rest with Him; and we pray that we may not be disheartened either by other men's idleness or by our own.

How little do we yet repay Thee, trust for Thy truth, love for Thy love: why, then, should we expect our own efforts to yield us all returns at once? Lord, are we cold when we would feel joyous or tender fervour? are we dull instead of clear-minded? are we unready, impatient, fickle, unprofitable servants? We confess, that Thou mayest absolve, that Thou mayest, by mercy shewn, inspirit us for amendment. Alone, we should fail. The best fires of our heart, without

Thy cherishing, will grow dim and ashy: but Thou givest new fuel; Thou providest the re-kindling flame.

We worship Thee, wise God of enduring, universal, charity. We pray, we plead, we give Thee thanks, for many. O shed on us, and on Thy Church here, Thy softening, strengthening, harmonizing Spirit. Make this passing hour Thine hour. Load it with Thy benefits. Hallow it by Thy special presence. As it wings its flight onward, may it bear to each heart healing —a spiritual messenger from Thee, the Father of Spirits, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of Thy love. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

GOD of the workman, who blessest fellow-workers and fellow-soldiers with a special blessing, never may our work shame us because of our selfishness; never may our love fail us because of the selfishness of another. In the name of Him who finished his work for us all, who disdained not the craft of the fisherman and the carpenter, we come to Thee. Prosper our private diligence; purify, and then gratify, our personal aims. Are we servants? May we so serve that, should we become masters, our recollections may not shame us. Are we masters? So art Thou, the great, the just, the considerate Master. May we rule as Thou dost. Are we children? May obedience bless us. Do we guide the young? May we be patient with them as Thou art with us all. Are we lonely? Let Love prompt us to good works that shall provide for us society. Do we live amid many to whom we have tender ties? May we be

helpers, not hinderers, of their excellence and happiness.

God of nature, God of grace, truly Thou hast given glorious gifts unto men. Swiftness, and beauty, and strength, and song, and manifold amazing instincts, hast Thou distributed to the creatures round us. But man Thou hast crowned; Thou hast made him lord of all. We rejoice for our brothers; we lament for our brothers: but we arise from sorrow, and rejoice again, because of our Elder Brother. He has taken the thorns of the earth and made them his crown, and the earth shall cease to be thorny. Thou shalt yet be honoured, Lord God, in us Thy diverse but united children. Hasten Thy great social day. And bless us now with rest, and to-morrow in work: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sixth Service.

Lesson:

Jeremiah ix. 23, 24.

1 John ii. 1—6.

Mark x. 17—45.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, Psalm cxiii.

Psalm xv., omit vv. 3, 4.

Rivulet, 74 Hymn.

VI.

THE YOUNG RULER; OR, THE GREAT REFUSAL.

MAY 1, 1864.

"*Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.*"—Mark x. 21.

THESE two, the noble youth and the far nobler Teacher, met and parted, and each went on his way. The noble youth makes this one bright appearance, and then disappears for ever from our view. Is he but one of those stars which shine for a moment and then vanish into darkness? Surely the "blackness of darkness" was not reserved for one whom Jesus loved! Surely such a "lamp," as this Youth's fervid soul might have been to many, was not put out in "obscure darkness!"

The great poet, Dante, speaks of one whom

he saw in the penal world of shadows—"*him who made the great refusal,*" he calls him. And 'tis thought Dante means this Youth. He did make "the great refusal!" Christ invited his companionship, and promised him heavenly treasure; but he turned and departed, not in anger, but in sorrow. Grieved he was, for he had not thought such a price would be demanded for the boon he sought. A great gain was offered him, but a great loss was its condition. Beautiful was the morning dew that glistened on him, as with reverent soul he knelt before Christ; but at the first touch of the heats of trial it vanished away. O, nameless Noble, that might have been an imperishable name! O, early blossom of piety that never, to our knowledge, became sweet fruit! O, man, whom Jesus loved, didst thou ever love Him in return; and, as thou once camest glad and wentest away grieved, didst thou ever come grieved and go away glad? did thy blossom bear no fruit? was not thy name at least written in "the book of life," if not in the book of spiritual honour? We like not to think of so precious a soul as lost.

But this is certain, that the Young Ruler did lose an opportunity as bright as he himself was. He went on his way, and we see him no more.

Christ, too, went his way, a traveller who journeyed, "as sorrowful yet always rejoicing." And with Him went "his own," whom He loved to the end, and who loved Him. The earthly end was now near. And had this Ruler followed Christ, in but a very short time the Master would have taught the scholar what a love stronger than death is able to accomplish.

Our Lord's love to God and man was so perfect that it gave the sense of the chief commandments in a chief example; and yet our Lord says little of his own love to man, and little of his love to God. "The Father loveth the Son;" "I have kept his commandment and abide in his love:"—these are his words. To regard our love to God merely as duty is both insufficient and burdensome; to speak of that love with complacency is to prove how imperfectly we feel God's love toward us. Happy are they that can say with the Apostle, "We have known and believed the love that God hath toward us:" for

many of us can only say, "We have often heard of the love God hath toward us, but we have never yet thoroughly believed it." This truth, that "God is love," seems to us as a fruit with the very sweetest kernel but the very hardest shell. And yet, is it possible to love God without believing that He loves us? To do so seems like tasting the kernel without having had the fruit opened; for, if God's love is the kernel, our love to Him is indeed but as the tasting of that kernel.

And yet there has seemed to some a love of God possible, to which there is no hope of answer. The Jewish philosopher, Spinoza, says; "He that will love God must not expect God to love Him in return:" and into the heart of the German poet, Goethe, these words sank as a deep true saying. "Strange, melancholy, words!" shall we exclaim? If we do, let us add, "Yet not ignoble." No, they are not ignoble. If the search for truth yields pain, shall we abandon the search because of the pain? If the heart recognises everywhere a work of God in which it can delight, shall it cease to

consider and to love because it yearns for a sense of being beloved which yet it cannot feel? The Philosopher's words are a confession that there is a sorrowing sense of want in such love of God as that to which man can *naturally* attain.—"No! you must not expect God to love you as you would like to be loved." Even simple believing Christians, who have seen and tasted Divine Love, may expect such a response from God, to their prayer for aid and joy, as He cannot wisely give; and therefore it shall seem He cares not to give it, and so cares not for them who care for Him. Yet He more cares for us than we care for Him. It must be so. The "cross" proves it. And it is *He*, specially, who must love us, not expecting us, at once, to love Him in return. But *this* is the teaching of Scripture, that it is the sense of God's love to us that will produce love to Him. And if "nature itself" teaches us that there is a love of God which we may feel, but to which we must not expect such a response as we desire, Nature itself prepares us for the Gospel, for the good news of the Divine Love and Pity toward man,

by exciting in us an appetite which only this Gospel can gratify. And as sweet things often exhale odours which shew the quality of their substance and yet bestow not that substance upon us for our food, so it is with that sweet kernel of which we spoke. Our first longing love toward God is as the inviting but not satisfying odour of the fruit; his love toward us is the kernel: our fuller love toward Him is our tasting thereof and finding that "the Lord is gracious;" and our faith in Christ breaks for us the hard shell.

This gracious Lord "loved" the young man, but was not met with trustful entire response. Why did He love him? Because He saw him as he was—pure, enthusiastic, unspoiled though unproved. It is a false and forlorn view to take of man, that there is nothing beautiful in him before he becomes saintly. The very attractiveness of an unredeemed soul makes us the more keenly desirous to redeem it. But often, as a cultured tree knows nothing of the husbandries which beautified the stock from which it sprang, and thus caused its beauty, so youths know nothing

of the spiritual husbandries of past days, to which they are indebted for the moral attractiveness they have to others, and the moral strength which they themselves deem sufficient. The children of Christians, not yet Christian themselves, have by nature an advantage. Often they are more loveable than others. But they must not trust a "nature" in themselves that would never have been so lovely but for the "grace" that was in their parents. There is much in common, and even in perverted, men that has a rude native grace. There is yet more in the sons and daughters of the sincerely pious that has a natural hopeful bloom about it. God loves this, and so may we. But God may love a man whom He cannot yet trust; He may love a man who does not yet truly know, and cannot yet deeply love, Himself. They that in youth both run and kneel, running to the right Man and kneeling to Him in spiritual homage and to ask spiritual counsel, may well be even admiringly loved. These are none of them poor, though few of them may be "rulers" like this youth, and rich as he was. Youth itself, with

health, is wealth—wealth as in happy heaps that seem exhaustless. "O for an untried, unstained, unsuspicious heart!" may the silver-haired man say, sitting wearily on his chest of gold. "O for the eyes that shed the sunshine by which they saw, and that fired only in hate of wrong and love of beauty! O for the feet that broke from a walk into a run for very joy! O for a back too strong to bend in servility, and knees not too stiff to kneel in worship!" Beautiful is youth, twice beautiful if it seek to hallow its strength by high honourable enterprise.

But this Young Man—most of us cannot be as he was. Shall we therefore speak of him with gratified envy, pleased that, because he was rich, he went empty away? Shall we profess that we are indifferent to riches, because the natural advantages they give are balanced by such great spiritual disadvantage? 'Tis ill studying other men's weakness and failure only to exalt ourselves. *They* came to grief and to shame where we have had no opportunity to come to honour. How know we that ours would have been the honour, the shame only

theirs? And let us not profess an indifference which we may only pretend. Profession may suggest pretence; but proof renders profession itself unnecessary. Our Lord proved his love in his life, and by his death. We cannot prove that we would renounce riches, perhaps, for we may not have them to renounce. But innumerable are the persons that desire riches, and that trust in them and do honour to them, though they cannot gain them: and we *may* give proof that an ungratified love of money is not more trouble to us than an ungratified love of God. A man's cravings may be a temptation to him as well as his possessions; and there may be as much "love of the world" in a poor man as in a rich one. Still, what God has made the *general* lot of man cannot be that which affords only the scantiest hopes and opportunities of spiritual good. The few rule; the many are ruled. The few are rich; the many poor, or at least not rich. In the high places, high winds blow. In the bright places, faults shew so dark as to be seen of all. When man needs little help, he himself grows helpless.

With much plenty may be much waste. And he who may drink Pleasure's wine when he will, will often drink it when he ought not. Have compassion on the privileged; for their advantage is their trial, and may be their ruin. But an advantage it *is*, nevertheless, if only it be as a robe which the man can wear, a sword he can wield, a horse that he can ride. Hard indeed is it for those who trust in riches, whether they trust in the riches they have or the riches they crave, to enter into the kingdom of heaven: for the rule of that kingdom is absolute,—A man shall have nothing but for its use; and he shall enjoy nothing till he can renounce it for the sake of that which will enable him to use it. Make the simpleton a millionaire; and what will he do? Go to Vanity Fair, and buy folly which will only make him the gaudier, bigger, simpleton. Make a wise man penniless—what will he do? Clean shoes, if nothing else offer; clean them *well*, because work should be done well; *civilly*, to gain respect; *for nothing sometimes*, out of love to some weary bemired traveller; and *busily*, day by

day, till promotion comes, because the sagest man must have a livelihood until God wills that he should carry his wisdom to a world more worthy of it.

This rich young Ruler was no selfish corrupt worldling. He sought to have, perhaps to *merit*, eternal life. And if we cannot merit heaven, we cannot have heaven without merit. He was prepared to do something great, no doubt. It was not likely that Jesus would ask him to make a very liberal contribution to "the bag" that one of the disciples carried. What did he think would be required? Some great largess to the poor? For *that* he would have been ready. Even a Herod, in his magniloquence, will offer half his kingdom to a girl that had amused him: will not a modest enthusiast do as much on a nobler adventure? But the king will not be *discrowned*, nor the noble *impoverished*. The Youth would like to do something gloriously good, which he might wear as a rose at his breast, or carry as a heavenly decoration granted to *him*, an honourable courtier of the King of Kings. He knew not that he lacked more

than he had to give. He lacked the giving heart.

But people secretly wonder at what seems the extravagance of our Saviour's demand. Yet it is not thought at all extraordinary that passion should do what this man had not heavenly love enough to do. Nature's love and nature's hate will alike empower a man to impoverish himself. And that a man should be able to spend his all for a woman, even for one unworthy of him, and yet be quite unable to spend his all for God and goodness, *is* wonderful, though not at all inexplicable.

"But if the Young Ruler had literally done what Christ proposed, would he not have committed a glorious mistake, and should Christ have asked that?"

Is it certain, then, that had he proved ready to make the sacrifice, it would have been any longer required? *You* will not say that the price is too high a one to pay for eternal life: but *he* felt as if it was. He aimed to build very high; and therefore he should have been prepared to found very deep. He must learn that

his trust and love for God are not sufficient to enable him to risk his property, to bestow it in charity, rejoicing in a present good, and confident of a future recompense. Such a sacrifice would not have been beyond the power of an entire confiding love. For any one to sell all his goods and "give to the poor" *would*, under most circumstances, be a mistake. To do so out of deep love and pity would make the mistake a glorious one. To be able to do so, when it was wise to do it, is, plainly, what may be affirmed of the highest goodness. But there have been many men willing to die for their convictions, who have not needed to die for them. God read in their heart willingness and courage; but the sacrifice was not exacted because it was not required. What makes any sacrifice *reasonable* is the difference in value between what is given up and that for which it is given up. What makes a sacrifice *admirable* is the sorrow freely endured in the giving up, because of reason's estimate of the value, and the certainty, of the benefits love will secure. Abraham was put to the proof. It was tried whether his trust

in God and reverence for Him were strong enough to enable him to sacrifice his son. They were; and therefore his son was spared. No good end would have been answered by Isaac's death; but great good resulted from the proof given that Abraham was willing he should die. If this young ruler had said, "Lord, what permanent good to the poor would come from the distribution of my property among them?" he would merely have reasoned with Christ, and shewn that, willing as he was to give up all for love, he desired to serve love wisely. But his difficulty was not of this kind. It was not that he was unwilling to make the sacrifice *in this way*, but that he was unwilling to make it at all. He sincerely sought to be good; he admired, he revered goodness: but he thought to be good in a brilliant easy manner. He had not strength to be good at the proposed cost.

"Was he therefore excluded from the kingdom of heaven?"

It is sufficient to say that he was unable to follow Christ *fully*. Goodness has work to do, quite necessary, for which he was quite incom-

petent. But God does not reject what we *can* do because of what we cannot. Only, in the gradations of the spiritual realm, they who have borne the most, and been the bravest, will hold the highest places. No man is to be blamed for being born rich or born poor, born clever or born dull, born in this century or in that: but according to the love he has shown, such as he could show under his conditions, will his place be. And the placing of all who get rest and joy at last will be greatly due also to what those, greater and better than we, suffered in order that we might be as good and as great as we were.

We said just now that the lot of the majority was a hard one; and that unless such a lot was also a good one, this would not have been the case. *Some* of the benefits that come to us by sufferings we *voluntarily* incur, come also by sufferings that we *must* bear, and that we cheerfully undergo. The great working, wanting, weeping world *goes without* much that it might not have strength to give up; and learns, by its very privation, to look to, to long for, and

often to enjoy, the love of God. It has nothing if not that; and, having that, it possesses all things.

A moral life, easily and habitually, though not at the cost of any great suffering, *kind*, is a loveable one; but, like much that is ornamental and attractive, it beareth not the root, but the root it. Much may be done to the tree by training, much to the man by teaching, but you cannot *learn* to do what you have not the heart to do. You cannot learn to manage, on any stream, a vessel that draws more water than the depth of the stream supplies. This loveable youth came to the Teacher, and sought instruction concerning a good life. Christ was good; therefore knew how to be good; therefore could teach him. He had only to *learn*, and he too could be good as his Teacher was. But this brilliant scholar *forgot God*, even as he addressed his "*Good* Master," not because he was irreverent, but because he was superficial. *This* Christ never did. The revealing Christ was as a window—to look *through*, rather than to look *at*. He *shewed* God; He did not hide Him. Of what-

ever fruit Christ bore, God was the root. Only the like root could yield the like fruit. Christ was at once the proof that man must be "good," and that of himself he never can be. To sunder himself from God, as if he were independently good, would have been, for Christ, to commit the very sin He came to cure. He showed that goodness alone was adequate to do what was needed; and that God alone could inspire and sustain that goodness.

The Young Ruler had read the first lesson, but not the second. He knew that goodness was necessary, but not that "only one is good, that is, God." Had Christ accepted the title "good" from one who only saw *Him*, not God in Him, He would have fallen Himself, and involved the inquirer in his fall.

"But does our Lord's answer imply that the Young Ruler could keep the commandments, or that by keeping them life could be secured?"

Is there any life eternal except in knowing and serving God? God's commandments are not grievous and arbitrary. They are the ordinances of beauty and joy. Things well done

are lovely in their aspect, and happy in the doing and in the results. Life is enjoyed *in* keeping the commandments, in doing as God would have us his creatures do. But they can only be kept as we attain the living ability to keep them. Thus, an adult man's privileges are enjoyed by doing as an adult man does: but a child cannot enjoy these privileges because his ability is not mature; nor an invalided adult because, though fully grown, he has not the powers of maturity. So an uneducated, uncivilised man cannot have the life of culture, because the "commandments," the ordinances of that life, though suitable to him as a man, are beyond his ability as such a man. The way to keep God's commandments in future is, first of all, to learn that you have never fully kept them yet. This Young Man really had kept God's law according to his understanding of it; and he could only be blessed as his comprehension of the law, and his disposition to fulfil it, were advanced. But in him there was no capacity to become a chief example of obedience to the chief laws, as there was in Christ.

"Had he, then, no benefit from obedience?" Jesus loved him: was not that a benefit?

"But did not our Lord withdraw his love when the Young Man withdrew from Him?"

Oh, surely, *that* love did not change into hate, as rejected love so often does among men. No; the Young Man drew back, but not unto, though toward, perdition. If he left Christ less happy, he did not therefore leave Him less worthy. Some plants have hooked seeds; and some *truths* have such seeds. Christ had sown in this man's mind a hooked seed, that painfully seized it; but there was life in the seed, and, as it germinated, its thorny points would cease to pierce.

"Was his spiritual ambition greater than his spiritual capacities?"

Perhaps so.

"And, learning what he was *not* fit for, did he not also learn what he *was?*"

Again, perhaps. Still, there was "the great refusal." And if it is to him that Dante refers when he uses this expression, he places him among those who have neither praise nor blame —unmarked men, not very base, not very good.

How many such there are! They take not the flood-tide that "leads on to" heavenly "fortune." The ebb of this man's wealth would have been the flood of his prosperity. He had been happy in his virtue, and happy in thinking of it, and hardly knew how much of his happiness as a *virtuous* man depended upon his being a *rich* one. People are often happy in their religion because they are happy in their circumstances. They do well because they are well to do. These are good people, but they are not the best sort of good people. They do honour to Religion as their very good master, and to themselves as his very good scholars; but they are but dry pools when the rain ceases, for no inner fountain feeds them. They know not how much Christ can do for them *without* the world, but how much He can do *with* the world, to help Him. All such goodness is only *hopefully* good as it learns that, without trial, it cannot know that it is *lastingly* good.

Nevertheless, among the easy religionists of the day are many "sons and daughters" whom Jesus loves. From their youth they have kept,

not without pleasure in the keeping, many divine and human commandments. What lack they? Only the fulness of a life which, without the letter of law and the legal official to expound and enforce it, will practise the law in spirit, and honour it most when dispensing with its mere requirements. "What does the law ask me to do?" says one, who intends to do no more than the law asks. "What do I more than others?" asks another, who feels that he should do more, because more has been done for him. He who has the law written on his heart does not need to see it written before his eyes; but he who sees it only *there*, sees it not even when it is there, if his heart fails him and makes his eyes dizzy.

But what can we learn for ourselves from this Young Man's refusal? There are very few extraordinary openings of any kind in most men's lives; but there are sure to be at least a few very testing hours. And these hours often come just as the youth is turning man. He has professed, and has really felt, much admiration for noble things and noble persons. Education has

directed his enthusiasm, and the world has not yet damped it. What lacks he? Courage, perhaps, to become a foremost advocate of an unpopular truth, which truth he has privately seen and honoured: or, perhaps, "hardness" enough to become *soldier* for anything; he has a silver tongue, but not a strong hand; he will be trumpeter on gala days, but must not be looked for among the slain, or the surviving, in decisive hours. Many have preached the kingdom of heaven, saying; "It will come; it is at hand;" who, when it has come, but with "garments rolled in blood," have fled, not tarrying to welcome it. How indeed could they welcome such a coming!

Of the beautiful enthusiasm of youth much is wasted, much exhales, much changes into mere worldly energy: but, always, some is the morning dew of the coming time; and, always, some is to the Word of God like the horses of heaven, which are spirit and not flesh, instead of becoming, as without the Divine Word it would have done, like the horses of Egypt, which are "flesh and not spirit."

But let us not mistake. As the test may not come to us, being rulers and being rich, so neither may it come in one hour, but may rather be applied through many a weary day. "Wilt thou be perfect?" is the question put to us. "Canst thou persist in thy choice of the better part when it still exposes thee to the worse opinion? Canst thou persevere in work unrewarded on earth, believing that thy reward will be great in heaven? Canst thou still love according to the first pure love of thy soul, when great Love itself does not yet appear, to be thy paymaster, though but in his own coin? Having been invited by thy God, by his Word that "speaketh" day after day, by thy own soul that has listened with delighted awe, to give thyself wholly to what will cost thee friends, and fame, and ease, and gain thee only an honoured grave and a heavenly home,—hast thou refused "Him that speaketh?" It is "the Great Refusal." "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it!" said the ancient sage sadly. The very poorest man holds, in some sort, the world in

his hand, and might buy wisdom and honour if he would. To the poorest, Satan, the Adversary, makes an offer: "Invest with me," he says, "and I will make thy one pound many. Is not the world thine as well as another's? I will make it a bigger and a brighter world for thee." It is sad to make a mistake in this matter of investment. Judas, probably, felt as if *he* himself had done so. Perhaps he secretly commended the Rich Youth for being so cautious, and secretly despised his Master for sending away so splendid a disciple, for so asking all as to get nothing. To invest your goods with Jesus Christ is not alone like investing seed in the ground, which must be hidden for a while that it may be seen presently in new abundance; it is also like investing a body in the grave. Your "goods" are dead, dead and gone, and can return no more. Shall we slay the good we have, and bury it with a contented "Resurgam" inscribed on the tomb? Ah, but where will you rise, and when? You will rise in another world, but *I* want to rise in this! What security have we? The security is in these words: "Jesus, behold-

ing him, loved him." The Lord looketh at the heart; his looks shine into it. Let not the heart turn away. He seeth Wisdom sitting there as a friend, and the World as a visitor: we were ashamed of our friend before our visitor; we are now ashamed of our visitor before our friend's Friend. But if we take leave of the politic world, that now blusters and now is civil, and make choice to live in that Love which receives us and would both win and keep us, this Love is our security. It is genuine; it is permanent; and by it the Divine promise to us is signed and sealed.

He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he has given will He pay him back again. Are not the unhappy, the ignorant, the erring, the weak, the sinful—all, *the poor?* and are not we, if to any of us Christ says, "Give up thyself and that thou hast—thy 'net,' thy 'drag,' thy coins, thy crown, and at least thy flesh and blood, if thou hast nought else—to Me and my Service;"—are not we, if to us such proposal is made, as we yield to it, those who *give to the poor?* He that refuses his

own highest good, refuses also to relieve the many "poor" whose friend he might be. O, sad, to be loved enough for Christ to make our heart an offer of his own, and yet to refuse the heavenly offer!

But let us hear two men. The one says, "I could give God an undivided heart, if He gave me an unembarrassed life. I am no 'ruler:' I am a drudge. I have nothing to give up, for I can't get anything. Let Love come to me with a *love-token*, bring some money in his hand. A smile is no good. Hungry folk can't smile or live on smiles. Give me something to eat, something to satisfy my incessant cravings, and then if you smile, I'll smile back again. Even Cæsar would be hardly respectable if his image were only on a penny; let me see it on a pound. And let Love do something more than smile, and I'll thank him, and perhaps love in return."

This man is but a churlish kind of speaker. He is angry with everybody but himself, with the world, with Providence, and specially with those who are better off than himself. He thinks *that* a sure proof that they are worse than their

neighbours. Be kind to him; be patient with him. Such men begin to be happy when they cease to brood over their own unhappiness: and that will be, sometimes at any rate, when some one, patient with their evil tongue, has induced them to do a little good. Help somebody worse off than yourself, and you will feel that you are better off than you fancied. You may subdue an angry man by bearing with him, but not by answering him: *that* is as if the steel should try to make the flint leave off giving sparks, by striking it again.

The second man we spoke of says: "What, now, is the distinct difference between a spiritual career and a worldly one? This Young Man was a 'ruler;' let him, then, rule well, justly, mercifully, and without arrogance. Will he not thus raise his worldly into a spiritual career? He was rich; that is to say, he was like a wide and deep river with much water in it: is *that* a worse river than others? a village may be built by a streamlet, but a city by such a river's side. Let many, then, prosper by his prosperity."

Yes, we reply, let him so rule, so prosper.

But power and wealth have no blessed coming, and no blessed stay, in this world, save through the labour and devotion of those who will even agonize. There are things to be done that only a few men can do. Let the aspiring at least learn that they are not of these few, unless they can leave all, and dare all, for the Truth's sake. Perhaps this Ruler did go away from Christ, and rule justly. Perhaps he wore the crown of rule more humbly, because he was made to feel that he shrunk from the cross. *Any* career may be spiritual that is not in itself base. Be you scholar, merchant, mariner, artist, statesman, artisan, you may be saint. They who establish a prosperity of any kind, and they who sacrifice one for a higher kind, may alike serve God. But he who is called to sacrifice most is called to the hardest and most honourable service. Yet is there *no* service without some sacrifice.

A worldly career is a selfish one; a spiritual career, an unselfish one. The worldliness is not in the deed, but in the doer. The more of generous justice, the more of spiritual habit. The more your full river, if it is full, is a river of

water of life to others, the more blessed is it in its flow. But whether you prosper or suffer, you may alike serve God. Only, do not suppose that the gate of any Divine temple will be made easily large just to admit *you*, because in your prosperity you have "waxed fat." Do not imagine that Wisdom is so much flattered at having you for a pupil, that she will set you easy lessons, and yet give you the gold medal. Shall one who is only "a great man," all swagger and spangles, take precedence of James and John? No; nor James and John of him, if he will become a little child, and humbly serve, and meekly suffer. Giants are an unblessed race, often only big enough to do mischief, and with a heart that likes the work. Bigness, whether of mere stature, purse, repute, or pretension, finds no favour with God; greatness, much: He Himself is "great," in wealth as in love, in condescension as in glory. Trust not in princes, nor in gains, nor in your wisdom or your virtue. Trust *in God*. Hear his invitation. Refuse it not. Accept it, and your fears will disappear. Reject it, and your trust will prove vain.

Scholar! having won the gold medal as a learner, do not employ Truth as a minister of praise and cash; but be yourself the servant of Truth. Merchant! have ventures that seek the heavenly haven, and not ships on all seas but that which reaches to "the shining shore." Artist! see not beauty in all things, yet none in Him who made them all beautiful. Ruler! to whom obedience is so acceptable, render what you receive. O all who feel in yourselves a love for what is fair and good, that must make you loveable, cast not away the love of God; refuse not his invitation: if it be said, "Come up higher," let not the proffered honour slip from you. Say not, "I *cannot* take up my cross," if God has said, "Take it." Say not, "I *cannot* follow Thee, for Thou art going up to Jerusalem, to die." This is the Great Refusal. Thou mayest indeed love, and even serve, and enter into the eternal life, though thou hast thus refused; but honour was offered thee, and thou art without praise.

Let us give praise to the praiseworthy. Let us follow "afar off" rather than not follow at

all. But why not follow closely, fully? Let us count the cost, if we aspire to attain that which is precious. And let no man "exalt his horn," unless he is prepared to "thrust" with it. This the Young Ruler did, and he was abased. We will hope that, humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, he was raised again in due time, lifted from the dust. But forget not that he might have occupied a spiritual throne, might have been a companion of Christ in his afflictions, and reigned with Him eminently in his joy. But he made "the great refusal!"

Prayer before Sermon.

O THOU, who alone hast that eternal life to give which Thou hast created us that we may desire and then enjoy; we give Thee Thy just honour, and acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. The glory and the sweetness of eternal life Thou hast not kept hidden in Thyself: Thou hast shewn them; Thou hast bestowed, and art yet bestowing, them. Thou hast made Thyself, the Father, to appear in Jesus Christ Thy Son; and we, with unveiled faces, may behold the glory, full of grace and truth. And Thou hast not made Him chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, that all others, in their dark and low estate, should be but as sorrowful admirers of Him. Thou hast given glory to Him, that He may put it upon us. Thou wilt make us lovely by his love. By Thy softening yet strengthening grace in Him, Thou canst make our hard hearts tender, and our weak wills steadfast in good.

O blessed Fountain of fresh and ever-living waters, pour forth Thy life through Him whom Thou hast made life's channel for us. O Sun, whose wide bright beams shine from everlasting to everlasting, never to be dimmed, nor quenched, nor exhausted, let these free enlivening beams come to us, from his countenance who is as the Angel of the Sun, whom Thou hast made Lord of glory, to give eternal life to man. Here, as in absence from Thee, yet not forgotten by Thee; here, as subject to death, and yet assured of life; here, having nothing securely, and yet possessing all things by a hope that maketh not ashamed, we pass our days. O let them not end in confusion. May we call to remembrance Thy remembrance of us: may we feel life arise and lift us upward even in those heavy hours that threaten to sink us: and may hope itself be so choice a possession to us that we never can be poor.

Lord, not without loving Thy commandments, can we keep them; and not without loving Thee, can we love them. Be pleased to create in us love to Thyself, that we may say: We

love Him because He first loved us. Thou who dost, as by perpetual creation, uphold the world in all the order and all the beauty of its service, by Thy powerful word; so also perpetually create in us the new heart, the right spirit. We know that in doing Thy will our own life is revealed to us, and Thine eternal life manifested therein. But, O Lord, we cannot know, we cannot do, Thy will, without the work within us of Thine instructing, and Thine inspiring, Spirit. Can thirst yield the water that it craves? But Thou canst make it very blessed to drink, because of our desire for the blessing. The life we have makes request unto Thee for the life we need. Lord, make us possessors and inheritors of life eternal.

Hast Thou given to us aught of the world's good and advantage, to us who have not yet yielded Thee all honour and service? hast Thou withheld aught from us, to whom yet Thou speakest of Thy goodness? O that we may render, and surrender, unto Thee what we have, upon Thy call. O that we may trust Thee in our necessity, nor count it a light thing to

know Thy heart, because Thou hast not yet opened unto us Thy hand. Truly Thou hast made man so that to himself he may be as riches; and we would spend ourselves to the best advantage. We would invest our time, devote our strength, apply our thought, bestow our love so that the return to us may be manifold. What shall we do? Is there none who will hire us? Is there no heart offered in exchange for our heart? Is there no glorious cause for which even life and the world were well lost?

Lord, Thou answerest us. We hear Thy call. We read Thine offer. We see Thy heart. And the great cause of truth and righteousness, with all its glorious issues, still asks votaries. For this, we may plead; for this, contend. Many poor hast Thou, O Lord: and shall we do nothing to enrich them? For the poor in faith, and knowledge, and joy, would we spend ourselves at Thy call. But we ourselves also are poor; yea, the poor for whom Thou hast expended Thyself in the Gospel. Lord, we are comforted by the thought, that Thou dost love

us for our desire to love Thee. Is it indeed true that Thou seest all the good in us, when our neighbour sees often, and clearly, so much evil? True indeed it is. Thou art a willing and a generous Lover of man. O that we may abide in Thy love; and that Thy love toward us may be perfected through our acceptance of Thy calls, Thy offers, and through the spiritual sacrifice we make unto Thee of what we are and what we have.

Receive our prayer; forgive our sins: and in our meditation, let Thy wisdom be our teacher: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

WHICH of our hearts, O Lord, hast Thou not sometimes touched, so that we have made haste, and, running to Thee, knelt that we might hear and obey Thy commandments? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We have thought that, because of good inclinations, we were strong enough for good work. We knew not that our goodness was as the morning cloud. Lord, Thou art good, and doest good. And this good Thou wilt do for us,—shew us how far the heights of goodness are yet away from us; and give us Thine hand and Thy guidance that we may make the ascent.

We thank Thee that every man may help his neighbour, but that Thou hast laid help for us all on One who is mighty. His heavy cross makes all other crosses lighter. The freeness of his costly gift has opened many a closed hand, and made even the churl bountiful. He did the hardest things well, that we might all find some

hard things easy. Was anything too hard for the Lord? our Lord? and shall anything be too hard for Him in us? If Thou art with us, in us, we shall refuse Thee nothing; and Thou wilt ask nothing of us more than, by Thy grace, we should and can do. Thou wilt even forgive our large words if we say, We will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest; and, telling us we cannot follow Thee now, wilt say, But ye shall follow me afterwards.

Lord, let no happiness of ours shame and fret us: let us diffuse it, that we may more truly possess it. Hallow all our aspiration, all our attainment. May we be divinely high-minded, because humble indeed. Shew us, Lord, our several paths of life. Refuse not our prayer; and may we never refuse Thy blessing.

Lord of many disciples, Saviour of many men, for a church still militant, and a world still on its trial, we plead to Thee. Strengthen and perfect Thine own. Gather to them many that are still without. Let this day's blessing be large and rich, here and elsewhere, and its fruit unto life eternal: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Seventh Service.

Lesson:

Psalm lxxxv.

Luke iii. 1—22.

Luke xv.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 7 Hymn, 1 Book, vv. 1—5, 9.

Rivulet, 26 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 85 Psalm, Second Part.

VII.

REPENTANCE AND REMISSION.

MAY 8, 1864.

"*Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.*"—Luke xxiv. 47.

SUPPOSE there should arrive so wonderful a morning, that all the world, waking from its usual sleep, should wake with a new mind; that there should indeed be within the soul of man "a new moral world." All now regret their wasted time; all see and despise their own follies; all abhor the wrong they have done their neighbour: the old evil life is regarded with universal astonishment and repugnance; repentance comes in like a flood. Surely this wonderful morning would be a very hopeful one. But would men greet one another with smiles and congratulations? or would they hang their heads,

ashamed to look each other in the face? Would there be a general fear that the sky was about to darken, and vengeance to break in a tempest on people who had been so vile? or a general joy that at last the good time was at hand when want and strife would disappear along with sin, their great cause?

This much is certain: on this wonderful morning, and for many following days, the world would be immensely busy, so many things must be rectified, so many amended courses must be tried, so many reparations made. If repentance came in like a flood of sunshine, it would go forth like a flood of water. The mind, enlightened to see its evil works, would be aroused to sweep them all away. The universal change of mind would lead to a universal change of conditions. For the supposed change *within* is as genuine as it is general: and why should not the work *without* be as effective as that within, and the change of the world as thorough as that of the soul was genuine? It is indeed obvious that the Great Repentance would involve, and secure, alterations and reparations the most

varied and innumerable. For sincere repentance makes haste both to do and to undo; and if it were only, as we have supposed, both sincere and universal, two chief things, which prevent the accomplishment of what we hope from repentance, would be removed. Often, when we hope much from it, we find that it is not earnest enough for its work; and, often, its spirit works only in a few, who find it hard to do even a little because their neighbours will not join them. But we have been supposing all penitent alike, and all earnest in repenting. Great would be the immediate victories, still greater the promise, of this great day.

"O unexpected, and impossible day!" you exclaim. But there was a time once when a sun-rise call went forth over a whole country, sounding in every ear its notes of solemn joy. "Awake," it cried; "the day of the Lord is dawning: awake, Israel, ye beloved of God, who have forsaken Him: awake, for the old glory is returning in more than its old splendour! Israel! Israel! awake, arise; the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the joyful tidings."

Alas for Israel! alas for man! Too many slept the sleep of the sluggard, though the golden morning was bright about them. Some mocked and turned again to their slumbers. Some rose, but moody and angry, and hating the day. There was no general repentance unto life. "Lord Jesus, it is not enough to be gracious, and to stand with outstretched arms, speaking in tones that should win. Thou wilt not be accepted, till Thou hast first been rejected."

It is written that Jesus Himself went forth, in the days of his early ministry, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent, and believe the Gospel." A general repentance *then* would have made all Judea bloom like a garden. Honour to God would have filled the temple, and every synagogue, with glory; love to man would have abolished penury: and Israel, made pure by God's Spirit, would have been made independent by his providence: the yoke of Rome would have fallen off, as of itself, when once the yoke of sin had been indignantly cast away. But Israel did not repent, though called to repentance by the Son of God Himself; and

yet the good tidings were not proclaimed in vain.

"The Gospel" is spoken of in Holy Writ before what *we* call the Gospel had been discovered to us. *This*, indeed, is the *good news*, that the world of souls and of affairs shall be ordered according to the good laws of God, filled by Him with happiness and prosperity, protected and preserved by Him from all enemies and all damage. There is to be a kingdom of God in which those who know much of Him, and who most resemble Him in character, will have the greatest influence and occupy the seats of power; in which there shall be no absolute ignorance of Him, no dull disloyal opposition to his law, but all, from the least to the greatest, shall know Him, though the greatest know Him best. What news is comparable to this news?—that the world shall one day be better and brighter than even the wisest men in it have imagined it could be. Well may we affirm that the Gospel must surely be "*this* Gospel *of the kingdom*," this declaration and promise that over a new-hearted, upright, happy

race the living God will rule, shedding his life upon them abundantly and always.

Yet what we mean when *we* speak of "the Gospel" is especially this:—That Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, according to the Scriptures. Is this, then, another Gospel, and one not so grand and full as "the Gospel of the kingdom?"

Consider: if one voice should say, "A house shall be builded, very great and fair;" and another voice should say, "Lo, the mighty builder has himself laid the strong foundations," —these two voices would not be in contradiction. With joy should we receive the first good tidings; with added joy, the second. The foundation, being such an one and so laid, would be to us a guarantee that the promised building would one day be finished. And the promise of the building itself would not cease to be a gospel, because our knowledge that the foundation was laid had become a gospel. "The kingdom shall come; rejoice ye that believe the announcement." "Jesus Christ has died and has risen, therefore shall the kingdom come, for this is its

beginning; rejoice then with a new joy, all ye that believe." There is no more rivalry between the kingdom of God and the sacrifice of Christ than between a tree and its deep living root. Meditation on the kingdom of God, his reign over the souls and affairs of men, can alone sufficiently amplify our thoughts of the Gospel. But this great house requires, and has, a great foundation. This spreading tree has a deep penetrating root. This wide river has springs ever rich and ever flowing. A view of the kingdom without the King is incomplete. A view of the King without the kingdom is restricted. The purposes for which Christ died and rose again, the powers involved in his death and rising, can alone be made grandly apparent as God, by Christ, is glorified in men and in their world.

Now what say the Disciples of their risen Master? "*Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.*" Once He called to repentance, and but few came; now He calls, and many obey the voice. There is no question as to the

greatness of the results *if* all men would repent. The morning on which they wakened to such newness of life would indeed be a wonderful morning. In considering such a morning, we should no doubt have to press, more closely than we have done, the question concerning the *fear* that repentance might bring with it, fear of what an avenging past may do; and a question, too, as to whether repentance of the very purest kind would itself supply *ability* to lead the new life desired: but there comes this prior question—How bring men to repentance? how bestow it upon them?

Note well, then, that where an uncrucified Christ failed, a crucified Christ succeeded; that where Love before sorrow was weak, Love after sorrow was strong, yea, mighty: that God manifest in the flesh was unable to subdue the carnal mind effectually till his own flesh had been made a sacrifice. In ploughing, there is the thrust of the share into the earth, and the pressure of the arm, or other pressure, on the handle above. It is by his humiliation that Christ pierces the heart of man; it is by his exaltation

that he gains leverage, so to say, to make his humiliation effective. He makes his death the share of the plough, and his rising the handle thereof; and by these He opens furrows of repentance in the heart of the world, which are ever becoming bright with "fruits meet for repentance" that spring from the words He has sown therein. Well do the Disciples say, now that they have learned Christ better than ever they knew Him, and are meet to be his Apostles, "God hath *exalted* Him to give repentance and remission of sins."

It is these—repentance and remission—that He says in our text are to be preached in his name, in all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Thus He spoke, having ceased to suffer and come back to those who had seen Him suffer. He did not say: "I have done for ever with this hated earth. Enough of bitterness, enough of men's shameful refusals: I go home, to forget the sad, the weary, past in an exceeding joy." No; He goes away to remember in his joy those who have caused Him sorrow. He has laid the foundation; and none shall mock Him because

what He began to build He is unable to finish. He has founded salvation, as it were, "*on the floods*," "laid the beams of his chambers in the waters." Every day the waters swell; many days the waters rage: but the pillars of the world stand therein and cannot be overthrown, and He is setting the world upon them.

What now are these "pillars of the world?" Are they not Truth and Right? And what is that kingdom of the world which is founded upon them? It is the everlasting kingdom of God's dear Son, in which all the citizens are dear to Him and dear to one another. They have all repented unto life; they have all received the remission of sins; they are all now "alive to righteousness," with minds in which Truth leaves no part dark. This indeed is man's salvation, his passing from death unto life, and his reinstatement, as one now sharing the life of God, in all those joys which were lost through the decline and the departure of that life. With sun-clear brightness, with dewy freshness, with fragrant sweetness of morning hope, should we set this before our minds;—*The*

gift of God to man is life. We are not saved till we are blessed; and we are not fully blessed till we are altogether rid of the poverty, and hunger and thirst, and fear and hate and restriction, that mark a state of evil. Salvation is, as it were, the alchemy of God; it makes of the earthy man a heavenly one. And as winter is never gone till spring has come, and goes that spring may come; so man's old state of sin is never past till his new state of happy goodness has arrived, and the death of trespasses does but end that the life of righteousness may be established.

What then is it to preach "repentance," what, "the remission of sins," what, to preach these in the "name of Christ?" He that repents leaves the wrong way to take the right. Repentance is a change of mind leading to a change of conduct. He that repents turns quite round to God; his back was to Heaven's gate, his face is now toward it. A single action may shew the change, as the weather-vane, pointing to a new quarter, tells us that the wind has changed. And what a change that may be! "The wind

is west," we cry; "the drought is over!" How simple is repentance, how mighty the effects!

"Effects!" "Simple!" Is the rain that blesses the thirsty land *caused* by the turning weather-cock? Is the great change of wind, of which even smoke or a straw may give us notice, one to be had for the wishing, or so very *simple* in its causes? We cannot state too simply to ourselves what repentance is; but this repentance, of which we so speak, is a very great thing. This change in the soul's weather may come in with stormy darkness; thunder and rain and tempest may be the servants of God that bring the blessing. To preach repentance then is not merely to cry: "Consider your ways, amend them." It is to present such *inducements*, and to provide such "*assistances*," that the soul may feel itself very powerfully dealt with for amendment: and these are provided and presented in Jesus Christ.

Consider how the first preachers preached. They charged upon the people the great sin of having rejected and murdered their best Friend. They declared that for such an evil people, per-

sisting in their sins, wrath was at hand. They shewed that the Great Friend, who had been their victim, had been raised from the grave by God and had received the highest honour from Him. And, speaking on their Lord's behalf, they offered not only forgiveness, but a happy and exalted life with Him, to those who would now turn and acknowledge Him. By such words the minds of thousands were stirred. How black their sin seemed! how dire the woe to which it might lead! how sad, how wonderful, how bright the story of this Jesus of Nazareth! and how animated, and both bold and kind, the address of these Apostles! What unexpected mercy, this, too! To forgive those who had rejected Him! Christ in heaven, having ceased from sorrows and left this world of sin, will be the Friend of his enemies, will bestow on them his life, and protect them by his power! Let them not reject this second, this greatest, offer of life! Neither they nor their fathers knew Him so as to receive and trust Him when He was among them.—O stinging thought! All hearts sink and tremble. Men raise their hands; they

clasp them; they unloose them but to beat upon their breast. And yet, with this strong feeling about the deed done, there works, and there prevails, another strong feeling about the life and pardon offered. So dark as the cloud, so bright was the bow that shone upon it. So irrevocable as was the past, so imperative seemed the acceptance of the present mercy. What was said about Christ's Death filled their hearts with a mist and a darkness, and through the stormy gloom the law of God shot fearful lightnings. But what was said about his Resurrection smote those clouds with sunbeams, shewing their terrible forms, but dissolving them into a rain of purifying sorrow, and by means of this very sorrow making the bow of hope to shine. Had not Israel *inducements* to repent, being made thus to see both what they had done, and what God would nevertheless do for them? Had not Israel *assistance* in repenting, in the frank mercy of the call made on them, and the ardour with which it was uttered and urged?

We speak of *inducements* presented and of *assistances* provided, naming them separately;

but, in fact, these are blended. We may indeed *wish* to make a change that proves impossible. But if once the new way be open, every inducement we have to leave the old one inspires and assists us to take the new. The old way never looks as bad as it is till the new way looks as good as it is. Inducements and assistances work together. But without the great assistance, even the pleasantest and noblest inducements would not be felt, and all others would be in vain. And this great assistance is the call of God's suffering love, made to us in One who presents to the heart a form of life whose beauty and worth it acknowledges with inmost admiration. The repenting soul feels that it has lived amiss. Is it then enough, when it cries, "I would live anew! How can I live anew?" to answer, "Behold the beautiful life of your heavenly Friend. How sincerely, how plainly, good was He! In Him was a goodness near and not afar off; a goodness, not of words only, but of kind deeds; a goodness shown to the most miserable and to the outcast. Behold Him! Does not the sight inspire and enable you to imitate

Him?" It is not enough. The new life cannot be led except as new sensibilities to goodness are awakened. Sufficient ability for living it is not acquired by our independent contemplation of the Holy Pattern. The first preachers promised their hearers, "*spirit.*" They did not simply offer their hearers an example for imitation, but the gift of life from Him who furnished the example. The sensibilities and the resolutions of a soul whose opened and admiring eyes have seen the Lord, are themselves from *the life* divinely bestowed in Him: but the great assistance is his abiding favour toward and influence upon the soul as its living all-supplying Friend. For, with repentance, there is preached unto us, in his name, "the remission of sins."

And what is *this* blessing?

Did we not say that, were all men at once to repent, sure as it is that they could and would do a great work of alteration and of reparation, there might yet be fear as to the vengeance the past might take on the future? Now, where remission of sins is assured, this fear is destroyed. The effects of all sins committed have

been—wherever else also—in the soul itself. It has become a dark, weak, angry, perverse, inert soul, full of confusion, corruption, and disease. Surely what it wants is divine medicine, divine teaching, divine help. It wants an inward work by which it itself may be changed. It has no trustful dependence on God, no calm elevating sense of sympathy with Him, no happy grateful intimacy of love toward Him. All these it wants. It wants its sinfulness destroyed. If but once it become a *new* soul, loving and choosing good and not evil, what has it to do with its former sins? It has this to do. It must avow them to be wrong and hateful; it must remember them to gain impulse to work against them; it must undo what it has done in any case where it can; and it must gratefully welcome God's promise to undo their effects in itself and in others by his own working. Now, "remission of sins" is the assurance that God will not charge them against the repenting soul; and that He will break the strength they still have in it, and wholly disperse and destroy them. Pardon and complete deliverance are

assured; and at once the effect of former sin *begins* to be put away. But the process of salvation is a gradual one. To put on Christ is not the work of an hour. The Physician, once welcomed, many a visit must He pay. Even were the soul at the hour of its repentance absolutely assured that no more *harm* could ever come to it from what it had done amiss, it has all its *good* yet to win and to appropriate: as yet it occupies a low place; it is untaught, unclad; it must be educated; it can rise only by degrees. Christ has said for it, and for all souls, "I have overcome evil; I have perfected good." By faith in Him, *i.e.*, by our so personal union with Him, through trust, that He is ours and we His, we gain all the benefits of his protection from evil, and his promised impartation of God. But we enter into the fulness of the blessing gradually. And, strong as our confidence in the Divine pardon may be, sin in us does not at once die; and earnest as our repentance toward God may be, the good new life in us is not at once adult and all-accomplished. But, *in the name of Christ*, there has

been preached to us, and still is, "repentance and remission of sins:" "repentance," with all inducements and all assistances; "remission," with all assurance: the comfort of the blessing, the earnest of its full realization—these may at once be ours.

In the Name of Christ: shall we say, by his *power* the one is preached; for his *sake*, the other? Yes; so we may say. But the two blessings are one in Him who has subdued the past for us and won for us the future. Vain, and wrong, were any declaration of pardon without a call to repentance. Vain, and even mocking, were any call to repentance without the promise of pardon. Hope there can be none for man unless he be made divinely good. Good, and happy in his goodness can no man be made, unless the forces of evil with which he was leagued, by which he was thralled, to which he contributed, are overcome. Now our Lord stands the Representative and Champion of our race; and, in atoning for the wrong, He establishes the right; in putting down evil, He exalts good; in thrusting forth sin from the

flesh, He introduces incorruption and immortality. All saved men must taste of that death of Christ which He died for all; all must taste of that grace which He felt and shewed toward all. We must all approximate the Great Example by the one Enabling Spirit.

In any simplest case of repentance, where the penitent receives forgiveness; must there not be a dying to sin? will there not be an endeavour to make amends? will not happiness be a thank-offering to the Love that forgives? will not that Love do all it can to rectify the mischiefs which flowed from the evil that has been renounced? Collect, then, all the thousand cases of repentance into one, and speak of a repenting world. Must there not here also be a slaying of sin—a dying unto it; an endeavour to make amends; a happy thank-offering to Love: and will not that Love, God's love, rectify the mischiefs which flow from the evil the world has given up? Jesus Christ does, as the Representative and Champion of men, that which they could not do,—He utterly overcomes sin, He perfectly displays righteousness. He does that which it behoved every man to do,

if he could. But no man could. *He* did it, then, for all; and, as we said, He is our great Example, and gives us his enabling Spirit that we may follow Him. Man, now, may so do his part *like* Christ, as to make him partaker of what Christ has done that he himself never could do. Nothing but right can atone for wrong, nothing but good for evil. God, in the sweet, free, glorious love of Jesus Christ, disgraces and overthrows evil, compelling it by its own work to make manifest all the excellency of *his* work. Here is the Atonement: right against wrong, good against evil, love against hate, in such a way as to nullify what the adversaries have done, conquer and bind them, rectify whatever has gone wrong, and replace man's dark and low estate by one of greater and safer glory than before; and, as the Doer of all this, Divine Love shows its ardour and power in bearing the sufferings that the work involves. The Atonement is the great work of reparation, rectification, compensation, the making glorious amends to God by establishing what is eternally well-pleasing to Him on the ruins of what is eternally hateful:

and the sufferings endured by Christ in thus overcoming wrong with right, evil with good, give a glory to this atonement, and make it very dear to God, and very dear to us. They give Christ great power over us, making us both trust Him as pledging God's love to us, and follow Him, in so far as our way must be one with His, with devotion and courage. The sufferings are not the Atonement, but they make it very dear. They were *the condition* on which alone it could be made; and, by their influence on our hearts, it is *effectually* made for us. The Atonement is the introduction by the work of the Lord Jesus, who died for us, of eternal righteousness and joy, in a way so glorious that the amplest, the noblest, the sweetest amends are made to God—yes, and to the suffering universe also—for the long dark reign of evil and all the mischiefs wrought under its sway.

In the name, then, of the Chief of Men and Champion of all—in the name of this purest, bravest, humblest of the sons of men—in the name of Him who loved God and loved us alike perfectly—in the name of Him who suffered to

the uttermost that He might save to the uttermost—in the name of Him who did "once for all" that which involves and provides for the doing of all else, who therefore holds the threads of all lives in his guiding hand, extends over all souls the shield of his protection, sheds forth on all the warm beams of his loving and righteous kindness: in the sacred name of this Man from heaven, who is God with us, repentance and remission of sins are preached unto us. To *us* is the word of this salvation sent.

What shall we say, then? Shall we exclaim, "Repentance! are *we* then in our sins?" Let the man who feels that he is in his sins separate himself from the rest of us, and let us hear what is said to him. "O man, God has light for all dark lives, patience with all wayward souls, pity for all men who are distressed; teaching—easy gradual teaching, for all who will learn; a place and a welcome for outcasts; forgiveness even for those long impenitent; work, which He will trust even to those who have long been untrustworthy; riches for poor souls, strength for weak souls, love which can kindle love even in the

unloving: and all these He has in his Son. *He* has suffered, and He will spare: repent! He can teach the stiffest knee to bend, inspirit the most forlorn heart so that it shall wish and endeavour anew: repent! Repent, and you shall receive forgiveness, be made partaker of the spirit of grace and hope; a new heart, and a new life, shall be yours. In hope for the future, you shall forget fear for the past. O, consider what inducements there are to repent—what you leave behind! what you see before you! Repent, then, believe, and live a life of amendment by the help of Him who made amends for us all. Be assured of God's mercy in Him. Day by day, and often hour by hour, you shall feel yourself passing from death unto life."

Ought any of us to hear such words spoken to another without appropriating them, each in his own way? *Throughout*, our Christian life is one of amendment and of aspiration. There is ever some repair, some improvement, to be effected in the soul. At the outset of our course, at various special times, Repentance is a distinct solemn act; but, throughout, it should be a pervading

spirit. So also, at special times, we hear of Remission, as if a voice said to us, "I have put away thy sin; I have accepted thy faith in Christ;" but, throughout, sure hope in God, who maketh all things new and carries forward all new things to their maturity, should be a pervading spirit within us.

If but the desire for amendment and the hope of purification pervaded us as a spirit; if the world were full of such a wish and such a hope of its accomplishment: what changes would there be! In this spring-time of the year, how bright and rapid are the changes that the showers bring! how universal the response to the enlivening influences of the sun and rain! The "little hills," the little flowers, the great trees, and that to their tiniest shoots, "rejoice on every side." And if the spirit of repentance should descend as a wide diffusive rain, then would the spirit of remission, of God's free grace, follow it as a wide diffusive sunshine, and the general heart would be as a watered garden, everywhere budding and blooming with the beauty of the Lord.

Pleasant emblems are these—rain and sunshine; true and bright are the words, "glorious Gospel of the blessed God:" but the cure of sin in the world, and even in a soul, is but slowly and painfully wrought. The growing weather of the soul is often stormy weather. Is it not so? So in very deed it is. But far above all changes and all noise shines the changeless and the silent sun. "His kingdom ruleth over all." We must sometimes even ignore time and trouble by our faith in eternity; forget conflict and its alternations in our confidence of victory; speak of sin as dead, to be made alive no more, though it is only dying, because Christ has died and is alive for evermore. By that faith in God's grace, because of which, mighty as it is to purify, God can even count our sin as nothing, we should, mighty as it is to sustain, be able to count our sorrow as nothing. The great kingdom will come; the Sun of Righteousness will shine on a world all whose wildernesses have become gardens, all whose people have become righteous. This is the assurance we have in the Gospel: but the

very heart of this assurance, the gospel of the Gospel, is, that Christ, having died, has risen; and, as the Sun, even now shines on us after, and again after, the rain. Jesus the Saviour has risen in the firmament, and shines, blessing the husbandry that drains the marsh, and subdues the wilderness, and sows the field after its sorrowful ploughing, bearing toil and bearing heat, hoping still for rest and rejoicing hereafter.

Prayer before Sermon.

O THOU who workest all things according to the counsel of Thy good-will, wonderful indeed is Thy working. Thou art not yet well-pleased with man, except through that hope of the Gospel in which we are happy that we may live. Thine image is not yet formed in us, but it is forming. Thou art well-pleased because of what we shall be.

O that the earth shone more with the tokens of Thy coming day, that the growth of the fields which Thou hast sown were brighter! But Thou seest not as man seeth. Thou hast pastures even in the wilderness, which are hidden from us. Thou seest the seed in its dying beneath the ground, before the springing of its new life above. Everywhere, and everywhere patiently, Thou art at work. Lord, increase our faith, and may we ever remember that the world for which we pray is Thy world. But we— Lord, Thou knowest us. What do Thy search-

ing eyes behold in us? is Thy kingdom indeed coming within our hearts? We worship Thee, the God of grace: O be very gracious unto us. Let us not think about Thee without serving Thee; nor muse upon man's estate without mending our own; nor argue and teach of the way of salvation without walking therein.

O Thou true God, in whose personal and ever-mindful love toward us is our only hope, grant us a repenting heart; grant us the remission of our sins. With heavenly prudence may we consider ourselves, because Thou hast considered us, and told us Thy good-will. May the spiritual care we take for our life cease to be burdensome by becoming constant. May hope flourish through faith; and we, knowing that all things are already done for us which are needed to enable us to do anything, work therefore unanxiously: for it is Thou who workest in us. Thou, who receivest the sinner, wilt destroy his sin. Thou, who callest him to repentance, wilt soften his heart by the sorrows of Thy Son, and strengthen it by His endurance and His victory. Thou, who dost pass by

transgressions, dost enable us to renounce them.

To Thee, Thy creature, Thy child, man, must look. We look to Thee. Better that our eyes should fail with looking upward, than that they should be ever bent on the earth, on the dark dust of its sorrow or the glittering dust of its vanity. But though our eyes may grow dim and weary, yet can they not utterly fail. Thou wilt not suffer the light of their hope to be quenched. Thou art a God that wilt not disappoint. O Hope of the heart, O unfailing Spring of Mercy, O Giver of the bright word of covenant, Thy bow of promise,—it is to Thee we come. Open Thyself bounteously to our requests. Open Thy hand, Thy heart, Thy lips. Display Thy tokens. Make those who have been afraid with Thy storm confident by the quiet shining of Thy love.

O plenteous, satisfying, prolific Spirit, our hearts depend on Thy bounties. This night may our God work in us. Now may good tidings from that far country, which is yet our own country because our Father's country,

the heaven of our God, the home of our Saviour, —thence, may good tidings now descend. Anew may we hear the faithful saying, worthy of our own and of all acceptation. May we hear it as a call to glory and to virtue; hear it as an invitation to join with our God in love to man; hear it as the promise of an end worthy the beginning. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:" and shall He not come again to receive his saints unto Himself? We would be saved from sin, saved by this great hope. May such true union be established between our souls and our Saviour that we may feel his lot, his success, his character, his joy, must be ours.

This is Thy counsel concerning us, that we should be conformed to the image of Thy Son. We know Him as He was; we know Him not yet as He now is. O that, while we now bear the image of the earthy Adam, we may assume the likeness of Thy Son in his humiliation on earth; that, when we put off this our tabernacle, we may be clothed with the likeness of Thy Son as He now is in heavenly glory.

Lord, Thou knowest our world, all in it that is common and dull, all in it that the weak flesh makes necessary, and the evil of the flesh makes vile. Let our highest and holiest thoughts have, we beseech Thee, some sustaining, some purifying, influence on our commonest hours. Thou art a just God and considerate. Only perfection will satisfy Thee as the end; but every true desire, and every true effort, is acceptable to Thee. May we connect all in us that is infirmly and so poorly good with Him who alone is good, by our faith: so shalt Thou be better pleased with us in Him with whom Thou art well-pleased eternally.

Truly, O Lord, the earth is dark and needy for lack of Thy salvation. Send forth the preacher, the sower of Thy word, the ambassador of mercy, the witness of Christ Jesus, we beseech Thee; and may we all, by our life, publish Thy salvation. We pray for all; for kings and the high; for the lowest of the people; for those who want, and those who have; for those who turn toward the truth, and those who turn away; for those who bear the day's

burden, and those on whom the eventide has come; for those also who are in the dew of their youth. O Lord, hear that prayer of thousands, with which we mingle our own: Father, glorify Thy Name, through Jesus Christ the Saviour. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

O THOU who hast shed purity into the air of life, and purged away its corruption, so that, when the free wind of Thy Spirit has blown, we may breathe and not die: to Thy great counteraction we look in all things. The Enemy plots; but Thou dost foil him. He casts our crown upon the earth; but Thou dost cleanse it, and replace it on our heads. He suggests hard thoughts of Thee; but Thou givest tender proofs of Thy love. Thou only, the Builder of the world, canst be the Repairer of the breach made in it. Thou only, the Framer of the law, canst set it forth in its completeness when men have marred and broken its form. Thou, who didst make the heart that it should be joyful, canst alone retune this Thine instrument of music, now so dissonant. Thou art the only sufficient, but Thou art the all-sufficient, Antagonist of sin and death. Where shame was, Thou hast set glory; where rebellion, obedi-

ence; where feâr, exceeding courage. This hast Thou done in Thy Son, and for us all, that Thou mightest, through one Son, have many sons, and bring them to glory. He has atoned, balancing against an awful yet a passing shame an eternal excellency. We thank Thee for the restoring, the outweighing, the counter-balancing work of Christ. We thank Thee for the strong arm that threw back, and overthrew for ever, the hasting wrathful foe. May we believe that, because his throne is established, his kingdom shall come. On, far on, we look; O when shall the great and good day come? Give us patience, O Lord; but give it as to followers of those who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises, and who wait joyfully for their fulfilment unto us. Come, Lord Jesus, with a present coming: come, satisfy the heart: speak peace, whisper hope; touch us with a healing hand; breathe on us with a refreshing breath; set flowing, keep flowing, the springs of life that are so low in us, so scanty. Come, come quickly; and, coming, abide with us, O Lord, for Thy mercy's sake.

Give us new days, and a better wisdom for them; and may our mornings waken us to Thy work. Lord, the night is Thine, the day is Thine. May the night serve us for the day, and the day win a blessing for the night. And if, at morning, we repent and do our first works; at evening, do Thou still remit our sins, according to Thy great mercy and faithfulness, in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eighth Service.

Lesson:

Isaiah lv.

Luke viii. 4—21.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts; 10 Hymn, 1 Book.

Rivulet; 89 Hymn.

Dr. Watts; 89 Psalm, 3 Part.

VIII.

THE ERRAND OF THE WORD.

MAY 29, 1864.

> "*For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*"—Isaiah lv. 10, 11.

UPON what errand has God sent forth his Word? He has sent it forth on many errands: "ten thousand thousand are its tongues," and yet its work is one. It publishes "salvation" with all its tongues. For if it speak to the mourner, it would save him from the wasting effects of his grief; and if it speak to the wanderer, it would save him from the further loss of his time, and the final loss of

himself, in the wrong paths on which he has entered: and if it speak to the busy, it would save them from spending labour on that which satisfieth not.

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O Word of God! And happy are our ears that have heard thee, and may yet hear thee. For it is no vain message that thou bringest us. Thou hast gone forth well-instructed in what thou shouldst say, and art now come to us without pride and yet no flatterer. Thou hast tidings for us of great truth; and the fault will be ours if the tidings be not also of great joy.

Yes: the Word of God to us is, that unto *us* is born a Saviour; that for us He lives, and ever lives: and that whether we grieve, or wander, or are busy—whatever be our need, as happy or sad, as well-friended or without friends, as in our sins or having forsaken them,—to us the message of salvation is sent in its power.

These words of the Prophet are the more powerful because they are so pleasant. They have the charm and vigour of Nature in them. Rain and snow! who is not familiar with them?

Do we not all know what they do for us, and how little we could do without them? All the world is debtor to them for benefits great and innumerable. God's wisdom in apportioning to the rain its quantity, and appointing its times, according to the countries where it is to fall and the wants of their inhabitants, is known to be very admirable, though known but in part. The watering of the earth is a heavenly business of immense magnitude. Rivers of water flow down to us from God's moving fountains, the clouds. Yet not as rivers do they descend. The Lord of magnitude is also the Lord of multitude and variety. He divides the water into countless drops, or forms it into countless snow-flakes which are even more wonderful for beauty than they are for number. By mist and by dew also can He do the work of watering the earth. But, however it be done, it is done effectually and marvellously. And if the heart of man be sometimes terrified, and often perplexed, by the work of God, to how much of that work does it take kindly! The rain and the snow, the sunshine and the breeze, how much does the interest we

feel in the life of Nature, and in our own life amid Nature, depend on these! Every one cares about rain, and believes in it. Every one does *not* care about truth, and believe in that. The Prophet takes that in which we believe most to help our faith in that in which we believe less, —our faith in rain to help our faith in the Word. And as the weather, though both friend and foe, is more our friend than our foe, and is very real to us, and sometimes a very sweet comforter as well as often a very kind benefactor, his words about rain and snow have in them *the charm* as well as the vigour of Nature.

And *this* is the lesson he would have sink into the heart of dull unbelieving man as the rain does into the earth, That the heavenly errands of Nature are not more sure of success than the heavenly errands of Grace; that the God of husbandry is even more the God of the husbandman; that, if water nourishes the earth, much more truth nourishes the soul: that if God's bidding is done by the winds that carry about the clouds to water the world, so also is it done —as surely, and in a higher way—by the Spirit

that brings and dispenses to us the words of holy instruction and comfort.

God's spoken Word shall be an effective Word:—let those who publish it, and those who hear the proclamation, believe this. Ask the rain, and it shall teach; the snow, and it shall testify. The fields smile and sing when the rain is over and gone, and the blessing it has left is growing hourly richer and brighter. The snows of the mountain—which are, as it were, the depths standing upright in a glittering heap; water solidly stored for rainless days, as corn is stored in harvest for the winter season: these snows testify, as they melt and change into streams, of God's bounty, and that it is a provident bounty. With confidence, then, we may speak of God's word and its return to Him. For, mark, the Prophet says that God shall have a return from the rain, though the rain itself "returneth not" to the heaven from which it descends. The sower may sow and the eater may eat, for there is enough in the fields for this year, and plenty to spare for the next. Why? Because the earth has been watered, and, by

watering, has been made to "bring forth and bud." The produce of the fields is one return that God has for his expenditure in the rain; and the health, happiness, and gratitude of "the sower" and "the eater" are a yet more precious return to Him. And his *Word* shall bring Him returns, suitable, ample, precious. He softens the dry ground of souls, and it puts forth bud and blade. He sends forth the adapted truth, with its adapted accompanying influence, giving both the seed and the rain; and in due time He puts in the sickle because the harvest is come. Toward *that*, God is ever working, is working *now*.

Let this thought rest upon and impress our hearts. The passing hour is one of the hours of salvation. Blessed divine processes of spiritual growth and nutriment may now begin, may now go gently, surely, on; may now, so to say, start forward at accelerated pace. Is there any one here who has not heard, *i.e.*, has not heeded, the word of the Lord? O sinful man, consider thy ways. Are not the ways of the ant and the bee wise? What store art *thou* laying

up, what preparation hast thou made, for the harvest time of the heart? Believe it—God *only* can be man's rest, wealth, safety; and all this He will be to thee, if thou wilt receive his word. And, O traveller on the good old road of righteousness,—worn, discouraged, traveller, perhaps; O husbandman in the good old fields of the Gospel, who canst, perhaps, rejoice only with trembling as thou lookest on the growing corn of thy life; believe it—God is working, working now by his Word, in thee, for thee. This passing hour is one of the hours of salvation. Now is spoken, to the careless and the thoughtful, the adapted word with its accompanying influence.

But may we venture to say so? Is *our* word as the word of God? Is the hand of the sower, we may ask, the hand of God? Yet the seed he scatters has life. So our mouth is human in its impotency, even if it be holy in its sincerity; but the *word* that proceeds from it has life, if it be a word taught us of God. The mouth is ours, the truth is His. And by that which the Prophet says of God's word, every one who

speaks on God's behalf may strengthen himself. Even the humblest of us has authority to say, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." We have authority to cry, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Incline your ear unto Him; hear, and your soul shall live."

The "world"—with which we are all so familiar, and of which we are all so ignorant, though we speak of knowing it, and do very feelingly know much about it—is to us a strange mingling of certainties and chances. Many things are certain, as that we must eat, breathe, sleep, and, at last, die. But of many things we cannot tell how they will go with us, though we are quite certain how they would go with us should such and such a chance befall us. We know how real a relation various occurrences in the natural world would have to our pleasure or pain; but we cannot calculate upon their occurring as we could wish. Our feeling

toward Nature is, then, one of mingled love and dislike, trust and apprehension. We cannot be sure that events will happen as we would have them; for that, much depends on *chance*, though all is *certainty* as to the effects they would produce if they were to happen.

Now the Word of God is the uttered mind of Him who made the world. And there is nothing in all Nature that is *certain* except because God has decided what to do, and can do what He decides. His will, then, is the ground of that certainty on which we depend, from which we expect blessings. But is it not, too, the ground of that certainty whence our alarm springs? Should a flood rise, or a pestilence spread and reach to us, must we not suffer? And how are we to be comforted unless God has given us his word that we shall not suffer? Is it not, to us, a *chance* what will befall, and only a certainty that if such or such be the event, such or such will be our joy or our distress?

God has a great word of assurance, for those who will trust Him, which makes the *certainties* of Nature illustrations of the sure reality of the

good things He promises, and enables us to meet its *chances* without fear. And, in speaking further, first, of God's Word, and, then, of the manner of its Return to Him, we must begin with this.

I. *Of the Word.* God has his word of instruction and kindness for particular men at particular times; but his great general word of assurance is this, "*I am thy God and Saviour, and all things round thee are subject to me: trust me, and it shall be well with thee.*"

When Jesus Christ spoke to his townspeople, they "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." So it is with us. Nature's voice is too loud to be disregarded; God's word too good to be true! But the gracious words *are* true. Many minds besides the mind of God have to do with the affairs of the world; but His is supreme. So then of God's word we say, It is the Word of Him who is above all; and its chief utterance is this word of wise good-will, the word of "the just God who is our Saviour."

But this commanding gracious word of God,

by which the world is ruled, is a word that has been uttered, that is uttered, that will be uttered. He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast, and stands fast to-day according to his will, and must stand while He pleases. He settled at first the order of the outward heaven and earth; and they remain according to his command. He settled at first the order of the inward heaven and earth; but He made souls free, and, in his wise good-will, subjected them to trial amid scenes of disorder and distress. And his word to them is one of direction, and of mercy, and of warning. It is a word concerning that settled order of holy and happy life into which it is his will to bring them, and concerning the way thither. It is specially a word inspiring humble spiritual trust in Himself, as the Source of all goodness, the Pardoner of iniquity. And it is a word which cheers, and leads us on day by day, with hope of comforts as we journey, and of a good end at last.

Said the Prophet to the Israelites, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." This was God's word to them, whose blessing

was as sure to them as the rain. And are any of us in a prison-house of dark thoughts, as in straits for lack of natural good; as in a net, spread indeed by evil men, but into which we should not have fallen had we not gone in the evil way? Then to *us* is this word of salvation also sent. But it is a word of *promise.*

"Ah!" says some soul, "you mean that you have not the key to unlock my prison-door now, but that you will bring it by-and-by."

Soul! we have the keys of the kingdom of heaven here. We cannot indeed unlock that gate of this world into another—Death, and lead you at once to liberty through it. *Would* it be liberty you would enter, did you pass that gate at once? We can say, however, *Repent, believe.* And he who feels the spirit of hope opening within him an entrance into a better mind, access to the wise healing truth, has not only the promise of deliverance, but real deliverance, in part, at once. The key of God gives him some freedom now: let him wisely use it, and the prophetic Word shall have for him its entire fulfilment.

The Word of God, then, is a word ruling over the whole world of certainties, and chances, and contradictions—far above that world, and yet speaking down into it: speaking to *us*, for whom the good order of the world was long ago settled, and is and will be maintained; for whom its disorder is allowed and controlled, that we may be tempted, yet have a way of escape, have, too, lessons unto profit, and lasting benefit to our souls. This word is a faithful word, full of mercy and promise. It says, "Repent;" it says, "Believe." It claims trust, saying, "Fear not chance and change." It gives promise, yea, promises many and great. And it reasons with us, drawing a plea for confidence in God from the confidence we repose in the rain, with its promise and blessing to the fields, and its power to fulfil the hopes it inspires.

II. *Of the Returns* made to God by his Word. *Of the Word* itself we have had to consider the kinds. And, summing up, we say, It is the utterance of God's glorious and gracious mind; and Christ is its performance and its promise—the performance of its ancient promise, the promise

of that full eternal performance which we await. *Of the Returns* we have, first, to reaffirm their *certainty;* and, then, to consider *the manner*, *the measure*, and *the time.*

(1) *Of the Certainty.* The great purpose of God *cannot* fail. What evidence is there in Nature of lacking strength? The sea is strong enough for its work—is it not? It has enough water to float the ships—has it not? The lightnings can rend the darkness with their flame, and rend rocks and trees with their stroke, if that be their commission. There is no lack of creatures to populate God's world, and serve Him in the many ministries He has ordained. Nature shows no sign of age, palsy, or consumption. It is rough and dark here, wanting there to certain desired ends; everywhere it shows itself a world unfit for the full joy and work of angels. But amid all its changes and its terrors, there is no rest from action; and its smiles are many, and its blessings sweet and prolific. Shall God's word, then, rest from its activity? shall his perfect Word *fail?*

(2) *Of the Manner.* But, then, we read of

messengers who went to the husbandmen that kept God's vineyard, and returned to Him empty-handed. "Why have ye not brought the fruit of the vineyard?" "There was no fruit, Lord, to bring. They have wasted the hours of labour, or consumed thy fruit in their own revels." This is quite according to God's will—that men should be free to taste and try what manner of god Folly is, what manner of reward Sin can offer. God's messengers go once, twice, seven times. And, if needed, the Word goes forth to banish the husbandmen from the vineyard. The Word returns to God in many ways. It yields, by its operation, proofs that his charge against men is true; it yields fruits of patience in the souls of those who carry for God the rejected message; it produces, by the results of its rejection, the acknowledgment that it ought to have been accepted, and the disposition to accept it if it be again offered. The issue of events must be according to God's mind. If his word of mercy, on which men might rely, is not received by them, then his word of punishment, for which the rejected word has opened the way,

goes forth into act; and this, by its action, may in turn prepare the way for another word of mercy, which is ready to go forth on its errand. So God's word is always fruitful, however unfruitful we may be. It has many manner of effects, but is never without effect. And it often rests with us whether we gain the blessing, which is quite sure if only we are quite ready. If the rain falls on fields unsown, is it the rain's fault that there is no harvest? But if God has at last to send forth messengers to take the idler, and the murmurer, and the deceiver, and the perverse, and bring them up for judgment; be sure *these* messengers will not return unto Him void, but will accomplish that whereto they were sent; *they* will not return as the messengers sent to take Jesus did, so that God shall say, "Why have ye not brought them?" For we must all come to render to the Truth our account, though perhaps we will not come to receive from Truth our freedom and its promise.

(3) Now as to the *Measure* of result with which God's Word returns to Him. In one sense all God's words are effective; that is to

say, none shall be without its use, none without service rendered in illustration of his power and character. But some possible effects may not result, others coming in their stead; the conversion of a sinner, for instance, may not *now* result, but, in its place, there may be a display of God's forbearance toward him. And so a hundred fold may not now be the measure of success, but only sixty fold or thirty. In *measure*, as in *manner*, God's always powerful Word returns to Him variously. Given to us for our use, as his Word is, and given with its certain promise, let us seek to make it profitable to ourselves, honourable to Him in an increasing measure. Whose heart is as full as it might be of good hope and good courage? Whose mind is as full as it might be of the wisdom of Christ? Whose thoughts are as ready as they might be in devising good? whose hands as busy in performing it? Whose heart is as full of devotion, whose mouth of good sense, whose business of honour and equity, whose days of industry and happiness, whose home of charity and piety, as all these might be? Let us, then, give more

earnest and constant heed to the faithful Word which so gives God's mind and brings with it his power, that it is both seed for the sower and rain for the field; whose blessing is such that the year's harvest is sure and will be sufficient, and the harvest of eternity sure and all-sufficient.

(4) *Of the Time.* And let us remember that our time is short and God's time long. Our time is short; we must then hear the Word and do it promptly. God's time is long; and therefore many of the returns his Word shall make him, returns in the abundance and glory of which we too are interested, are of necessity, and most wisely, delayed. No one of us is so mad as to set at nought Nature's power: no one of us so foolish as to expect to do any outward action without Nature's help: and no one of us so weak and despondent but that sometimes we have both confronted and overcome Nature's hindrance. Shall we, then, set at nought the Word of God, and expect success without it? or fear to overcome, by its aid, that world of which it is the real ruler? Weak as we are,

there is plenty of power for us; faulty as we are, and tenacious as is the hold of Sin on the flesh, the Word of Grace is sure, and clear, and strong. Short as our time is, it is long enough for winning eternal life; and we shall never, as eaters, lack bread, if, as sowers, we have God's blessing.

Prayer before Sermon.

O LORD, the Fountain of living waters, whose delight it is to satisfy and comfort Thy children, and who alone art able to make us worthy of that eternal joy Thou hast provided for us,—to Thee we come. We come that we may drink. The thirst we feel, which Thou only canst quench, is Thy gift. O that we may be willing rather to suffer for want of Thee than to be content without Thee. But why should we suffer? Hast Thou not said, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters?" Lord, we come; and we beseech Thee so to grant us an evening blessing, out of the abundance of Thy heavenly treasure, that we may say on the morrow, and on all days: To whom shall we go but our God? in whom but Him shall we trust? In his Word we have eternal life.

For Thy Word we thank Thee. Thou hast made the Book which contains it a possession common to us all. Let it not be the less pre-

cious to us because it is so common. Grant that at this time we may receive Thy truth, in the love of it and the comfort of that love, anew into our hearts.

This is Thy day, and therefore the more our day; for Thou hast appointed it that our weariness may be rested, and our hope refreshed. Now may the light of the world to come shine upon us who are travelling through this world toward that better one. We are resting; and we would remember the way along which Thou hast led us, and prepare hopefully for the stages which yet remain.

Some of us have little experience, and feel ourselves strong; others of us have more experience, and know that we are weak. Teach us our weakness, if we trust too much in ourselves: but, O, teach all of us that our strength is in Thee, and that Thou wilt not fail us. How many of the proud hast Thou in past times humbled, and then accepted! How many of the desponding hast Thou cheered! Thou hast perfected strength in weakness, joy in sorrow, and the knowledge of faith by the wanderings of error.

If we have erred in soul or mind, if our affections have strayed from Thee, if our thoughts have departed from the truths of Thy Word, seek us this night, we pray Thee, O good, O faithful, Shepherd. And has our heart indeed said, Who is the Lord? is not our patron and our portion the world? Lord, Thou knowest. The secrets of the heart, of all hearts, Thou readest: Thou seest, then, if we are faithful, and would become more fully faithful.

To Thee we lift the voice of our supplication: Grant us all that spiritual gift which Thou, our common Friend—more than our Friend, our heavenly Father, knowest that we need. Bless all. Together we make confession; together we acknowledge frailty and want; together we plead Thy promises, together desire life from Thee. And, in the spirit of our merciful all-loving Saviour, would we pray for our friends, our neighbours, and the world. O that the hard may be softened, and the sinful repent; that the afflicted may be comforted and relieved; that the poor may be made rich toward God, and have their temporal wants supplied; that the

ignorant may be instructed, and the perplexed find guidance.

Good of all kinds art Thou ever doing, according to Thy wise judgment of time and need. Inspire us, who seek good, with the will to do it: give us the power, shew us the way. May all our holy desires lead us to actions just and kind; and all our holy actions lead us to make fresh prayer to Thee for Thine help.

For Christ's sake give us a thoughtful mind, and a heart disposed to do Thy will, and to trust Thy Word, as Thou instructest us in Thy way; that this hour may yield its blessing, and eternity fulfil the promise the hour makes us, to Thine honour: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

O THOU without whom we can do nothing well, Thou givest to the earth its power to yield us bread; the sunshine and the rain and the dew are Thy ministers, serving Thee by serving us according to Thy will. Wherefore should we think Thou wilt withhold a blessing from our souls when Thou givest one so freely to our bodies? Evermore may we labour for the bread of eternal life, assured that our labour will not be in vain. And may this our labour have the less of carefulness and pain, through our increase of faith.

Thou who hast spoken through Thy prophets, and through Thy Son, the prophets' Teacher and Lord, write the word of Thy grace upon our hearts, by Thy Spirit. What has this night been uttered in Thy name, may it prosper by Thy power. Thou didst send Thy truth forth into the world, and Thou dost maintain its testimony therein, that we should not walk in

darkness, nor perish of hunger, nor pine away in weakness without a helper, nor die in our sins for lack of a righteous and compassionate Saviour. O that we, the necessitous, may in Thee find our provision. In us may Thy truth be glorified. From us may Thy word return to Thee, in the tribute of our thankful affection, in our patience amid cares and adversities, in efforts to live according to our faith rather than our fear, in much holy meditation and desire, in good works humbly done.

Save us in the hour of temptation. Let not lawful pleasures and businesses too much engross us, nor unlawful ones deceive and pervert us. May we manage our affairs with charitable and friendly wisdom; and keep Thy word in our hearts that we may not offend in difficulties by distrust, in prosperity by vain glory, in ease by sloth, in work by excess, anger, or impatience.

Sanctify us, O Lord, by Thy truth; Thy word is truth. Save us, govern us, perfect us, by Thy Son, who gave Himself for us that we might live through Him. Amen.

Ninth Service.

Lesson:

Philippians iii.

2 Peter iii.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 140 Hymn, 2 Book.

Rivulet, 63 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 139 Hymn, 2 Book.

IX.

SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT.

JUNE 5, 1864.

"*I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*"—Phil. iii. 12.

PAUL was a man who had been stopped upon the wrong way, and then sent upon the right. The wrong journey had been cut short, that the right one might be finished. Very effectually had Christ seized him, and, with strong friendly grasp, plucked him away from sin and peril. Paul never forgot this; and he never will forget it. When he was travelling on his earthly course, while as yet he had not attained his rest and his crown, nor heard his Master's "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," he often called to mind the commencement of that course.

What a failure would his have been, if he had failed! His soul had been illuminated by a light above that of the sun: what, if for him, that light should be quenched in obscure darkness! Christ had called to him, not, as to others, by his Spirit alone; but out of heaven had addressed him by name,—"Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What, if after Christ had thus "apprehended" him—put forth his hand and with merciful force drawn him from the dark foaming waters of passion which filled his soul, and in which he was perishing—he should have come short of the offered glory, and have proved only, first a persecutor, then a friend, then a traitor or a runaway?

Christ has "laid hold" of, apprehended, him; let him, then, "lay hold of eternal life," apprehend that. For this purpose has the Saviour made this man his own, that he should make eternal life his own. For this purpose has the Lord set his love upon this man, that he should set his love upon the Lord. As Christ has said to the Apostle, "Thou art mine, my servant, my friend:" shall not the Apostle say to Christ,

"And Thou art mine, my Master, my Lord, my Portion?"

Yes; God puts forth his hand toward us, that we should put forth ours toward Him. He stretches out the right hand of assistance, that we should stretch out the right hand of acceptance. God takes hold of us, that we should take hold of Him. We are "apprehended" of Him, that He should be "apprehended" of us. Let this be thoroughly understood and felt. Does the Word of God deal with us by a message distinct, full, sincere? Let, then, the *work* of God be dealt with by us even as the *word* of God deals with us. Let us do well, because we are well done by. Let us call to mind, as we are upon our way, all those convictions of truth, all those benefits of Providence, which have been for us the Divine "apprehending" of our soul, and say: "I will follow on that I may attain the full blessing for which these initial and inviting blessings have been given me. Has not Truth made me its own, by so speaking to me as to impress and captivate my soul? Has not Providence made me its debtor, and

won my trust, by giving me help when I had lost hope, and prospering with good fruit efforts that seemed fruitless? Let me, then, make that joy my own which Truth has taught me to desire; let me make that success my own for which Providence has warranted me to hope."

All work of God done for us is to the end that an answering work should be done by us. "Thus much have I done for thee; what wilt thou now do for Me, what for thyself?" Paul's answer to the Divine appeal was, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Henceforth," says the truly responsive soul, "to work for Thee shall be to work for myself also. Thou hast indeed made me Thine that I might make all I need and can desire my own; but what I need and what I desire is to partake of Thy goodness and Thy blessedness. Thou hast apprehended me for good, that I might apprehend my own good; but *Thou* art my portion, saith my soul."

The general law, then, of the Divine doing and giving is clear. God does us good that we may no more do ourselves harm; but, ceasing from that, may do ourselves good all the days

of our life. He does his work in the heart that we may do ours in the world; He gives mercy that we may gain eternal life. In whatsoever way He makes us his, it is that in some corresponding way we should make Him ours.

But we must "*follow on.*" "Then shall we know, if we *follow on* to know, the Lord." We must add effort to effort, and prayer to prayer. Very slowly does man reach his physical maturity; very slowly does his knowledge grow complete, his powers perfect, his character holy. Perfection is gained only by degrees, and progress implies patience. The man who *enters* on his way, not walking only, but leaping and praising God, will often find his limbs too weary to leap, and even his heart too dull and sad to praise. But let him not forget that he did leap, and sing aloud in his joy. Men look back to Nature's paradise of childhood, a paradise whose sunshine and flowers were not of this world only, but heavenly also; but they cannot re-enter it. Christians often look back to the early hours of spiritual love and enthusiasm, and say, "O that it were with me as in days

that are past, when the candle of the Lord shone!" but they cannot perhaps regain the blessedness they once knew. But if we cannot go *back*, we can go *on*. Think not of paradise without thinking of God, who planted it and placed you there. Think not of the good months that have passed away without thinking of Him whose presence cheered them. For, then, the Past shall testify concerning the Future, instead of testifying only against the Present. The secret of spiritual cheerfulness really lies in the lesson yielded us by the two-fold "apprehension" spoken of in the text. We wish to "lay hold" of a good such as we have lost. But this lost good came by God's "laying hold" of us, by his doing for us what was kind, by his giving to us what was pleasant. And to this end were we made to sojourn awhile in the Eden of natural or spiritual youth, that throughout our course we should remember its commencement with all its marvellous promise. Look to the beginning, that you may then look to the end toward which it points. Look to it; it was not *your*

beginning merely, but the beginning God gave you. Has it a serenity, a sanctity, a glory, in comparison with your present? It shall, nevertheless, have no glory by reason of that more excellent glory which the future shall reveal, if only you "follow on." The candle of the Lord that shone in bygone days still burns, if it be but with a feeble and a flickering beam; and, in our hours of meditation, we may light a torch from it very useful to us in the darker stages of our remaining journey. Let the Past testify *against* the Present, if we are misusing that; but let it also testify *about* the Present, saying, "On, Soul, on! The Author of Salvation is also the Finisher: for what hast thou entered on the race, but that thou shouldst reach the goal?" But he that looketh must run as well as look; and, if it is the Lord to whom he looketh, it is the Lord whom he must follow.

Paul speaks the language of resolution, and it is the language of encouragement; but he speaks it modestly, and it is an admonition to those whose aim is too low, whose satisfaction with themselves is too easy. We may consider

(1) the Attainment, what it is, and how to be made; and (2) the Lessons it yields to the desponding and to the complacent.

I. *The Attainment; what it is, and how to be made.*

Suppose a person stands well with his own associates. He does the things they expect him to do; he is skilled in doing them. He may not therefore stand well with us. His good, or even great, repute among his friends, may appear to us of no worth. He may be of no repute with us. And he will be deservedly so, if estimation in his circle be determined by what is trivial or vicious. He and his friends may care only for dress or idle pleasure. They may be gamblers, or intent only on crafty gains. Or they may be a very dull dry set of men. Perhaps they may be even moral, and yet have no strong spiritual activity. But be they what they may, they will have among them some *standard of opinion.* All associates have a standard by which they try one another. And, happily, it is not at all uncommon for a man to learn to regard that as insignificant which he

once thought important. A "new" man will have a new standard; and it may happen that what was once something, or even much, to him, may become as nothing, and what was once nothing to him, not even visible perhaps, becomes very precious.

Paul suffered what his former acquaintance thought a very great loss; but he obtained thereby what he felt to be great gain. Among his Jewish kinsmen he had enjoyed the highest estimation. He had come up to their standard; nay, more, he had come up to his own. All was right with him in their view, and in his. He did not at that time see something so noble and holy above him that he felt himself dwarfed and demeaned by the comparison. But his standard changed and heightened when he "saw the Lord;" and he came to look upon himself and his mode of life in a very altered manner.

"But was this a happy alteration? Is it not wretched to feel low because your new standard is high, and you cannot attain unto it?"

It may be so, or it may not. A simple contented man goes, for instance, among fine ex-

pensive people, and their way of life appears to him the happiest way. So he alters his standard of dress and pleasure; and, because he cannot reach his standard, he is miserable. Poor foolish creature! the standard of show is not the standard of enjoyment, still less of worth. The Israelites, again, measuring themselves against their adversaries, said: "We seemed as grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we did in theirs;" they could not come up to the standard of these tall men. But had God said that the tallest men should have the best of the battle? And if they were grasshoppers in their own eyes, was *God* become of no account in their eyes? *The very best standard* by which we can judge ourselves *is that by which we are certain to be found wanting; but by which we are invited and enabled to advance onward to what is noblest and best.* If what is admirable were only as a son of Anak, making us feel small and threatening us with its greatness, to know our master would be to know our misery. To look up would be but —to look down. We look up, and are terrified; and so we then look down, despairing. But

Goodness, and even a good man, is a standard of another kind. You cannot think of what is wanting without thinking of what may be gained. The spectacle of a good man "apprehends" you; it takes hold of heart and imagination; perhaps it even shames and condemns you. Yet it shames but to purify you; it condemns to absolve; it is a winning and a helpful sight. You were possibly a good man yourself, according to some poor view of goodness; but now you abhor yourself, and aspire to be like this exemplar. Henceforth, if at least the impression made on you is deep, you will judge of yourself by your approximation to this new standard. That which is *best* in you is your appreciation of what is *better* than you. You are not "up to your mark;" you cannot be. You are assured that what you value is truly precious; but it is not so much your acquisition as your acquisitiveness, by which you estimate yourself, and your new associates estimate you. The question is not, Have you attained anything? but, Are you seeking to attain more and more?

Now Paul had "seen the Lord;" and henceforth for him "to live was Christ," and to die "gain." Christ was to him both the end and the way. That is to say, his heart's desire was that he might have Christ's mind, Christ's affections, Christ's joy, for his own. If even the sight of a good man, in any field of work to which we are invited, can humble us to lift us up, how much more a true sight of Jesus Christ, in whom was no sin, in whom was all goodness? If our standard of what we should attempt, and what we would become, can be altered by our view of our neighbour's character and course, how greatly can our standard be altered and raised by our view of One who is "above all," to be blessed for ever by all? To Paul, Jesus Christ presented both that glorious moral Image to which he would be likened, and that potent moral Help by which he could attain to it. The Apostle had seen in Him the Beauty, and the Power, of God. His "righteousness" henceforth should be his relationship to this heavenly Master and Friend. "Measure me," he says, "by this standard: am I conformed to the

image of Christ?" "Nay, but Paul," we cry, "most certainly thou art not." "I know it; I avow it," he replies; "I speak not as one who has attained, but as one who would attain. *This* I have gained already, an utter discontent with the meagre rule and tasteless excellency of a life according to outward law; a grateful perception of the perfect harmony and sweetness of a life like Christ's. Yes, and more than this have I gained. Trusting to his power to keep me from evil, trusting to his sincere word of mercy spoken to me, trusting to Him as the well-beloved of God, I am accepted in Him. We are one—I, the believer, and He in whom I believe. I am loved, and I love, if it be but feebly, in return. He is all I would be. And He Himself is the pledge He gives me, Himself in his character and work, that I shall be formed after his image and enter into his joy."

We know that if a man is right according to the opinion of those with whom he lives, their approbation, and whatever social privilege may attend it, are his. Paul, as we have said, was right according to Jewish opinion; and he was

highly esteemed, and all social Jewish advantages were freely accorded him. But Christ "called" him; he "saw the Lord:" and now he is right in another way. His, now, is the "righteousness of faith." He has acceptance and approbation with God, as receiving Christ's mercy, glorying in his excellence, aspiring and endeavouring to be like Him. He has position with God. He has lost position among Jews; He has gained it among Christians, and angels. His faith, which is always looking up and going forward, is his "righteousness;" it is that good, God-wrought thing in Him which gains him acceptance, and approbation, and all divinely social privileges.

To be "righteous by faith" is to take *position*, not by your own perfection, but by your reliance on the perfection of another. To be "righteous by faith" is to have a character which is avowedly immature, but which gives earnest of progress and maturity. Your confidence is in Him who is the standard for your imitation. Below Him, you are bound to Him. The law of action, the pattern of being, shewn you in

Him, is not a limited one to which you can come up; but an infinite one which, though you never touch it, is ever raising you toward itself.

Truly this "righteousness by faith" is a very glorious thing. If you truly believe, you *have attained* confidence and the means of progress; *you seek to attain, and shall attain,* a sinless and perpetual joy. You do know your Friend; you *are* righteous by relationship to Him: 'tis this gives you hope, and dignity, and character, and privilege. And yet you who know, still desire to know; you who live, would live more abundantly; you who are a new man in the Lord, would have every thought, every affection brightly, clearly, new — as Nature is new in the morning and the *spring* morning.

We must "follow on;" we must regird our loins, retrim our lamp, renerve ourselves for effort. The race still lies before us. Blessedness, blessedness, the uttermost satisfaction of every pious honourable want,—*this* is before us. The many-flowered, many-fruited, paradise, with its great peace, is attainable, though not at-

tained. There the deep wells of Love brim over every day, and for all who are athirst. Under the cool shadow of its trees there will be relishing talk of past sorrows, and yet more relishing talk of joys coming and still to come. Picture your futurity how you will; if the heart but choose righteousness, the fancy may have what it pleases. But what appetite so dainty that it cannot feast on the great common promise? what fancy so ethereal that the heavenly pictures of Heaven contained in Scripture are not bright enough for it? The great common promise is of a good country where no tears, no darkness, no sin, no want, are to be found; and the picture of the country shews the child-like heart harps, crowns, golden streets, verdant trees, and a bright brimful river.

The Attainment, then, is the blessed resurrection life of Christ; life such as his, lived with Him, and in common with the likeminded and the likehearted.

And do we ask *how the attainment is to be made?* The answer is, By following our Lord. Live according to the law of his life, if you would

enter into his rest. Partake his character, if you would partake his blessedness. Yes: and we must be conformed to his *earthly* image, if we would be conformed to that which is heavenly. The one way has many steps; the one ladder many rounds; the one life many hours. But, speaking generally, the course is characterized by humiliation; and after the difficulty, the climbing, the suffering, comes the heavenly rest. We cannot be so high while we are going up as when we *are* up. And not only so; in ascending a mountain we may have, and more than once, to descend into a valley that intervenes between one summit and the next higher.

But, remember: we have been found that we might find; or, to use the longer and fuller word of the text, we have been "apprehended" that we might "apprehend." And suppose there were some venture of Trade or Science on foot, and men must be "found" to engage in it; if the right man—right in strength, skill, integrity—be found, have we not discovered him that he may make the discovery for us and for himself? selected him that he may attain the selected

object of desire? and will not the thought that he has been engaged for a service, fitted out for it, judged suitable for it, inspirit him to exertion? Whether men be "found" in misery, and taken thence, that they may "find" the happiness we shew to be within their reach; or whether they be taken according to their abilities, and associated with work that gives these honour and scope, that they may take a share in some great enterprise and secure a great reward—what motives are there to exertion! But the Christian has been "apprehended" in both ways. As a man he had his woe, and he had his gift; he was a sinner and in danger of ruin; he was a spirit with glorious capacities, if only in the germ, if concealed even from himself. And he is taken; he is "apprehended" of God. *There* is a deliverance, to stir his gratitude; *there*, a prize to stir his emulation! Let him walk, work, run, strive, worthily.

II. But as we now endeavour to gain some *Lessons for the Complacent and the Desponding*, we shall see further what "the way" of attainment is. The Complacent take too low a mea-

sure of "the stature of Christ," too high a measure of their own. The Desponding overrate the difficulties that will be assigned them to surmount, and underrate the help that will be supplied to them for the effort. The Complacent occupy their thoughts more with the glory that awaits us after the contest, than with the contest that awaits us before the glory: and that is well, if only preparation has been made for the contest, and the soul practise itself in the use of its arms. Sometimes we may look at the stars; sometimes we must look to our feet: when we are resting we may do the one rather; when we are walking we must rather do the other. And the complacent Christian is too apt to be gazing at stars of promise and hope when, if he would not stumble, his eyes should be fixed on his feet.

"But surely," it may be said, "if we know Christ—know Him as both shewing us and securing for us eternal life, this may give us joy!"

Indeed it may: and so salutary and purifying is the effect of spiritual joy, that we may well pray: "Lord, grant that I may so feelingly

know how real is Thy good-will toward us in Christ, that with a deep, daily, natural gladness, I may regard Thee in Him." But the sighs of Christ's life, the pains of his death, the tears of his love, the weariness of his frame, the malice of his adversaries, the timorousness of his friends, —these must we call to mind; let these admonish us. For all that in this world was so contrary to Him, is as contrary to us as to Him. And we have not attained to any great knowledge of Christ, unless we know Him as a Sufferer, and know that they who share his spirit must share his sufferings. When people have borne the yoke awhile, they think less of themselves, and God thinks more of them. A heavy yoke reveals the lack of strength, a sharp cross the lack of patience; the delay of benefits reveals the lack of faith, the praise of men the lack of humility, the blame of men the lack of simplicity and zeal.

Experience must lessen the complacence of all who are indeed pious; but, then, as complacency departs, despondency may enter. We knew not Christ's obedience in its holy height,

knew not therefore his sorrow in its holy depth; we were living as if up to our mark, and that mark the Christian one. We had not considered that as Christ elevates us, He becomes elevated to us; we knew not, or had forgotten, that they who are righteous by faith, have such a faith in righteousness that they behold it as far, far above them, and as ever calling to them, "Come up hither." When, however we have found out what *a great thing* it is to be a good man, how thorough and manifold spiritual excellence really is, and how much has to be resigned and endured by those who determine to fashion, and persevere in fashioning, themselves according to "the pattern of holiness,"—then we either ingloriously and wickedly tire, or we are tempted to despond, and also to complain.

And if Experience, by the sharpness of a thorn or the craftiness of a sin, or Truth, by the power of an unveiled exhibition of itself in an argument, or an example, can spoil our complacency, curing us of that: what can lighten our despondency, curing us of this?

"Resurrection of the dead," we cry.

"Ah! but I cannot think of rising afterwards, without thought of dying first."

"Follow in His steps!"

"Ah! but what firmness less than his can find footing where He trod?"

"Be glorified with Him; see Him as He is!"

"Ah! but without holiness no man can see the Lord, and his holiness is high, I cannot attain unto it."

But, desponding man, understand clearly that you are not called to be Christ's *equal*, but his *disciple*. Understand that you are not called to find out your own path, and walk in it without a guide to lead you, or a hand to hold you up. Understand that every man's ascent must be gradual; and that every man's appointed path is one adapted to his relative strength. And think not of "fellowship" with Christ, the Sufferer, without thinking also of "power" that is with and from Christ, the Saviour. Whoever is born into this world has a fellowship of the flesh with his brethren of mankind; and whoever is "born of God" into the Church has a fellowship of the flesh with Jesus Christ in the

days of his humiliation. But even in the natural man, what an enduring, recovering, triumphing spirit there is! What power, then, should there be, *must* there be, stored in Christ for Christians? what power in this Spiritual Man who lives and dies for all who will accept Him as their Representative, their Ally, their Saviour?

It is better to despond having seen Good in its brightness, and to cry, "Behold, I am vile!" than to be satisfied with self because we have not seen Christ. But if he is happy who throws himself on the earth before God, we can only call him so because, while he lies as dead, the risen, glorious, but ever-humble, Saviour comes and, taking him by the hand, says: "Behold, I am alive for evermore; and because I live, thou shalt live also."

Neither think yourself altogether such an one as Christ, nor Christ altogether such an one as yourself. You have *not* attained:—do you add, "And *cannot* attain?" You *can*. You have *not* attained, for you are not as Christ: you *can* attain, for He is not as you. He has done his

work: and his work is the work of us all. Our work was, in effect, done when his was done. Let us identify our cause with His who is the chief of our race. He is *the inward man* of our race,—the true, governing, regenerating Adam. And the way to cure despondency about attainment, is to contemplate the completeness of his attainment, and let that assure to us the certainty of ours.

In proportion as our desire to enter into a life altogether worthy, and so altogether happy, is sincere and earnest, the entrance into such a life "ministered to us" will be abundant. Christ came that we might have this life, and that we might have it abundantly. And though we can attain to the sweetness of life only by overcoming the sharpness of death; though, only by a tension of endeavour that seems to tighten "the strings of life" till they must snap, can we tune the heavenly harp for its music: yet all we *need* do, be assured we *can* do, through Christ who strengtheneth us.

Let no man look on the Attainment proposed as an Exaction demanded. We cannot become

good because we *must!* Unless there is a divine sweetness and excellency in Christ that wins our admiring affection, we cannot "follow on," hour by hour, step by step, trial by trial, after Him. It is not said to any man, "So much happiness thou canst gain, no more:" nor is it said, "So much faith thou *must* have, no less." Do the most, gain the most, you can. Love knows neither narrow precise limits, nor indeed limits at all. If creatures and things beloved have their limits, Love—like water that fills a vessel, and then overflows it; like light that fills a room, yet passes through it—is not limited by these. And it is *Love*, working through faith, that is the power in spiritual attainment. Good works are not demanded of us like a tale of bricks, just so many and of such a shape! Those who pursue Truth and Goodness, in the love of them, will seek to be just as wise and good as they can. Those for whom the holy love of Christ is the standard will never feel that they are "righteous" as exhibiting the full form of rectitude: their "righteousness" will be their loving and admiring *trust* of Righteousness in

its perfect form and creative power, as seen *in Jesus Christ the Righteous;* and this their faith will *work*, so that they may acquire a fuller and yet fuller resemblance to Him.

Why should they be other than *dis*satisfied with themselves? They have not yet awoke up in his likeness. But why should they despond? Has not Christ "apprehended" them—made them His, that they may "apprehend" Him—make Him theirs? Is He not alive *in* them, *for* them? Is He not forming them in his character that He may fit them for his blessedness?

Prayer before Sermon.

LORD of the Evening, who hast so often given us at sunset quiet rest and social pleasure, and hast made our lighter thoughts and our sober meditations sweet: this is the evening of Thy day. O grant us Thy peace. Enter into our midst, and shew Thyself unto us in Jesus Christ, saying, "Peace be with you, ye blessed of my Father." And are we indeed blessed of Thee, the Lord of heaven and earth? We who have often erred and faltered, do we still enjoy the favour and the forbearance of an untiring God? Happy are we that Thou canst not grow weary of well-doing; happy that Thou wilt visit the defective and the offending, and speak mildly to them.

It is in Thy great Name, O our heavenly Father, that we have met together: may we feel Thy presence in influences of Thy Spirit breathing on us like a cool and gentle wind. For are we not all a little heated and fevered with the care and

work of life? and are not some of us weakened, and some of us even disheartened because, after putting forth our strength, we feel thus weak?

We would be refreshed, and, by refreshment, strengthened. Tranquilly would we look back, trustfully would we look forward, because Thou art by our side, Thy voice speaking in our ear, Thy Spirit stilling our troubled souls, and shining on them as it stills them. Saviour, Thou art with us. We look back calmly, for we have been seen by Thee even when we wandered from Thee, and Thou hast saved us out of dangers and distresses. We look forward in the hope that reproves fear, and that maketh not ashamed; for our way is the way Thou hast trodden, and our rest that into which Thou hast entered. There remaineth a rest for the people of God; and Thou hast called us, even us, to be Thy people.

Have we indeed distinctly heard, and truly obeyed, Thy call? O Lord, call again to us, and we will answer Thee. Say to us, "Have I not led you? Come, follow me still." Say, "Would ye not have honour and immortality?

Rise; gird your loins; be patient, and hope to the end." Our souls shall answer Thee, "We come; we rise; we are ready: but, O, be Thy Spirit with us, lest we go onward in vain."

Lord, Thou knowest how dulness, like a mist, sometimes spreads over our view of Thy familiar truth, and hides it or mars its beauty. We see not then that which is near us, in its fairness; nor that which is far off, in its clearness. But Thou canst make our sadness like a rain in which the mist disperses. We beseech Thee, O Lord, that if we now grieve because neither in mind, nor work, nor hope, we are what we would be; in this sorrow our dulness may depart, and we may behold around us the trees of the Lord, full of sap, the fields of the Lord, rewarding culture, the sunshine of the Lord, full of promise and joy.

Give us, O give us, travellers, labourers, scholars, a revived love of our way, our work, our lesson. We would lift up our souls, and see, as it were, the sign of the Son of Man shining in heaven. We would see the Cross bright there, that was once so dark here. O

Father, grant us that purest desire, the desire to be all truth and love as Thou art: so that our prayer and heart's desire may mingle with Christ's prayer and heart's desire for us, and we may thus know Him as ever interceding on our behalf.

Here may evil die in us, that we may have no more death to undergo when our time on earth is over. By our prayer, by our meditation, by our effort, may evil be ever weakening in us. So may we die daily that we may the more live. And teach us not to fear the pains of this holy dying; and grant us to taste daily the compensating joys of holy living. By our prayer, our meditation, our efforts, may we live as well as die.

O Thou great God of flesh and spirit, of earth and heaven, of angels and men, Thou knowest us in all our sensibilities, all our desires. Our everyday life, our commonest care, our earthliest tasks, Thou knowest. Deep within husk and earth our spirit is, that unquenchable fire, that insatiate yearning for something good, and something better. Never let it be deceived by

earthly good: still beyond the good, and the better, may it behold and aspire to Thyself, the best: still, notwithstanding the bad, and the worse, may it press on, assured that it shall pass through all hindrance and reach its rest.

O that the fire of our souls might burn steadfastly to Thy glory, even as the stars burn in the evening sky. O that our yearning to enjoy good might become a yearning to do good; so that day by day "with good will doing service" in this world, as to the Lord and not to man only, we might follow those who followed Him, who did Thy work with power, and fulfilled all the good pleasure of Thine heart.

Hear us, O Lord: forgive, accept, assist us; and grant us all the blessings of Thy love, through the Son of Thy love, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

HOW innumerable, O Lord, are the dead that rest from their labours; and, O, how many are the living that toil! Truly, Lord, if not the living to praise Thee, we are dead though we live. And, truly, those who now praise Thee, because Thou hast fulfilled to them Thy promise, though dead, are alive for evermore. They have died the death of this world; they have finished their course; they have attained to rest: they have received that which they believed they should receive, and for which Thou didst call them to strive. Now they shine; now they sing: once they sighed; once they strove. Then they groaned in prayer; but now they triumph in praise. They said, "How long, Lord, holy and true? how long?" but now they say, "Into his kingdom we have come, and it is an everlasting kingdom." Yes; everlasting joy is upon their heads, but upon our heads, often, the dust of shame. Awake, our souls! Lord,

give us a morning spirit with the morning light. Enable us to run the race of those who now, from the goal, observe our course.

Every day some man pauses in his way, and some other quickens his step. Every day some man cries, "Lo, I have gotten me good," and finds that it is vanity; and some other, "I am the man that hath seen affliction," and, lo, through the cloud of his affliction Thou shewest him the face of his Saviour and comfortest him. Lord, we pray for busy, boasting, fainting man: man disappointed and deceived—man deceived indeed, but not yet wisely ashamed: for man chastized in mercy, yet to whom for a while there seems no mercy: for man listless, as if life had no prize, and man eager, but for vain prizes, and tormented by his eagerness. And such men, perchance, are some of us: Thou knowest.

Hear our prayer for man. Give us our share of the great common blessings of Thy comforting, chastizing, instructing Providence.

For those true men, witnesses for Thee, faithful and true, who have been fools to the world

that they might be wise indeed; who have renounced false fame for true honour, and idle ease for painful fruitful toil, and perishable good for durable riches and righteousness, and the homage of man for the approving love of Christ: —for these, we thank Thee. Our encouragers, our examples, are they. But we have a greater Encourager, a better Example.

By Thy grace, and Thy strength, may we follow in his steps; from Him receiving the prize; to the praise of Thy glory. Amen.

Tenth Service.

Lesson:

Matt. xi. 25—30.

Matt. viii. 1—27.

Matt. xv. 21—39.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 125 Hymn, 1 Book.

Rivulet, 38 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 120 Hymn, 1 Book.

X.

THE FAITH AND PRAISE OF A HEATHEN WOMAN.

JUNE 19, 1864.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Matt. xv. 28.

THE very dogs of which this wise, though sorrowful, heathen woman spoke, have become creatures almost of another kind by the companionship and care of their master, man. "Beware of dogs" is a Scripture expression—"dog" denoting a sensual quarrelsome person. And there are still many people who "make a noise like a dog." These are represented as "without." Not such are they who enter the gates of the divine and beautiful city. "Without are dogs," we read. And yet, though evil men

may be described by a comparison of what dogs once were, and what many dogs still are, so great is the general improvement in the breed of this animal, that we may sometimes send men to the dogs to learn, not what they should not be, but what they should. "Go to the dogs, thou unfaithful idler," we might cry; "consider their ways and be wise. See how they are on the watch to serve, and care more for their master's love than even for his meat, though their relish for that is keen enough." "Gone to the dogs," is a common phrase for ruined. But he who will go to such a dog as the shepherd's, for lessons in industry and fidelity, will not need to see the poor remnant of his fortune quarrelled over and devoured by creditors and companions, that are like the dogs of the street.

Shall the dog rise, then, and not the heathen? Shall there be a dog-like class of men, insusceptible of improvement? It is true there are beasts which man can tame, which yet he cannot so domesticate that they shall serve him as usefully as the dog does. But as is the dog in his rude state to the dog in his trained state, so

is whatsoever is animal-like in man, in his rude state, to this in its trained, its purified, state.

It is instructive, indeed, to observe the superiority of the heathen woman in this narrative to many of those who despised her. How common have a hearty contempt for, and dislike of, the stranger and foreigner been in the world! And the rough and wild condition of many of our neighbours has given some warrant for this. The civilized man has perhaps feared, perhaps disdained, the barbarian. But we look at the Jew, and see the professedly *spiritual* man scorning his heathen neighbours. That he who has the oracles of God should feel his advantage over those who have not those oracles is right. But the Word of God should teach men to make their own work resemble the work of God. And *He* makes his sun to shine on all nations, upon the evil as well as the good. The pious Jew of our Lord's day was too commonly a proud unsocial man. The wisely good man seeks to *connect* others with him, by the influence of that which *separates* him from them. Without separation from others, and even strict separation of

the people to be "taught of God" and trained for his service, it would have been impossible to prepare them for their good work. It is an ordinary and important rule of conduct, that we should separate ourselves from others for the sake of instruction, or purification, or the increase of strength. And whatever we gain, we must guard. But "no man liveth to himself." And they who, being separate from others and superior to them, do not seek to benefit them, are greatly injured by their pride and self-complacency. God had given to the Jew what He had not yet given to others. But He had made all men of one blood, though He had not yet communicated to all the same truth. The Jews had his Word. God had not so "dealt with any nation"—giving them his Word. But there is a "spirit" in men's hearts, even when there is not the heavenly word in their midst. God had not forgotten the heathen because his set time to favour them had not come. He was secretly present in their hearts by his "Spirit." It was of his mercy that their very religion made them miserable.

Every nation, like every man, has a distinct place in the great scheme of Divine Providence. And of no tribe, however degraded, must we think that God cares for them merely as He may do for birds and beasts. These latter feed on berries, or prey on one another; and the wild tribe does no better. But there is a spiritual providence over all creatures that have spirits. No *man* is a mere animal; and therefore no tribe of men is Divinely cared for merely as if it were a herd of wild animals. Low, indeed, in the scale of humanity are many of the nations of the world. But look to the higher nations, and see how low they are in the scale of Christianity. See how, when God gives new measures of "grace," new forms of sin appear. In the wisdom of God *all* varieties of wickedness are to appear in the world. That wisdom also provides that we should have means of estimating both the depth of degradation to which man may sink, and the height of civilization to which he may rise, as "without God in the world." And where He has revealed Himself, He has also allowed "the man of sin" to be revealed.

In the wisdom of God we are to know the worst shames that come by abuse of divine knowledge. And in that same wisdom it is—that our hope for others may be encouraged, and our pride in ourselves rebuked—that we sometimes find much faith where there is little light, and little light where there is much faith.

This heathen woman puts even the disciples to shame, much more their unbelieving fellow-countrymen. They did believe, and they loved their Master. But there were many who neither loved Him for his compassion, nor gave any credit to Him as a teacher for the sake of his pure, true, words. Our Lord was now, for a while, in comparative retirement. He is not leaving Judea to carry his instruction among the Gentiles. The Saviour of the World is first to be the "Shepherd of Israel:" when his glory has shone for a while on Israel only, then He will become a "Light to lighten the Gentiles." Already, kings tremble at the brightness of His rising; though they need not fear Him as if He were a king of their kind. His light has to be hidden in a dark cloud. It must seem quenched

before it will break forth unconquerably; and afterwards many peoples shall rejoice in Him, and kings hail Him as greater than they. *Now*, He is perhaps retiring awhile because of the angry temper of King Herod. But though He has not gone to reside among the heathen, and, as Shepherd of Israel, will soon return to Israel, *one* heathen heart shall reveal what good things there is in it toward the Lord; and the Lord Himself shall shew what goodness there is in his own heart toward the heathen. What good there is *in* the heathen, what goodness *for* them, shall both be shewn.

She comes:—a "Canaanite," Matthew calls her, speaking Old Testament language; a "Syrophœnician Greek," Mark calls her, speaking in a more modern way—and she cries unto Jesus, addressing Him as "Son of David," beseeching Him to cast forth a demon from her daughter, who was grievously vexed therewith. She came, then, in natural love. Happily it is no uncommon thing for mothers to love daughters tenderly. But the tenderness of love is very wonderful, though it be so familiar. Whence comes

it? This sweet water flows from a pure fountain; and that fountain is the Divine Heart. Even the affections of the "beasts that perish" testify of an imperishable loving-kindness. The lambs of this year bleat and play as they did last year, as they did in Jacob's time, and in Adam's; and their dams fondle them now as then. Nature's goodness, like the deeper clearer goodness of Scripture, is from God. And human nature's goodness, the goodness—not the sinlessness, the perfection; such terms are not applicable—of parental and filial and fraternal affections, these, too, are of God. "Without natural affection," is one of the Apostolic signs of very gross and desperate sin.

But a heathen mother may be as motherly as a Jewish one. Nature brought this woman to the Prince of Grace. What she knew of Jews, and of Him, we cannot tell. Probably she knew enough of *Him* to make her feel that He was very different from most Jews that she had known. She believed in his compassion, and his power. Perhaps she was drawn to Him by kindly feminine admiration, as well as impelled

by an earnest desire for her daughter's relief. But what, to her, could the title "Son of David" import? She had heard it given to Him as the descendant, and in some way the successor, of the most honoured king of the Jews. To her it vaguely spoke of power; to the Jews themselves it did not clearly signify the kind of power Christ would possess and exert. She used the title in all respect and trust. "O great and good Man, of whom I have heard such marvels! noble, compassionate, Sir! exert thy kind power, and heal my daughter." Her faith is grounded on her sense of his power and his compassion, and derives its impulse from her motherly anxieties. What the woman's religious notions were matters little. No heart in which dwells patient self-sacrificing love can be quite dark about God; but such love may make the heart very sad. It longs to feel that the mighty rule, which all have to acknowledge, is kind; that, within necessity, pity is working, and will prove itself the stronger.

It is not the mere coming of this woman to Christ that shows us her faith fully. It is the

manner of her pleading with Him. She comes in faith; but she pleads in "great" faith. She comes urged by *distress;* and what is distress for but to bring us to God? The happiness we have without God is lightly and foolishly mistaken by us for our real happiness. Distress shews that, if happiness sufficed us, *we* do not suffice to retain it as our own. Misery is a very unpopular preacher, who, nevertheless, compels a hearing, and proves a most edifying instructor to many. "Carry your grief to God," he says; and those who do, learn that the real happiness of man is in such a union between God and himself that, being like God in goodness, at last all the joy of goodness can be his own.

An unhappy God!—what a strange contradictory thought is that! Nature cannot but crave for happiness. And this craving is of God. Let it not be charged against Faith as a reproach, that distress quickens it and sends it forth as a petitioner. God sent the distress that it might induce us to think of Him, and see in Him a good to desire, a blended kindness and power that might warrant trust.

This woman's distress was the means of introducing her to Christ, and the occasion of such an exercise of faith in Him as greatly strengthened her attachment and confidence, by the blessing it obtained. Her trouble was a sad one, yet one too common. Her daughter was "possessed." So unfamiliar have men become in later times with the thought of spirits, evil or good, that "the demon" in such cases as this has been considered imaginary, and only the disease real. The supposition has been, and with many still is, that the Jews and others spoke of the terrible nervous diseases of their day according to their superstition, and that our Lord did not correct their mistake, though He may not have shared it. We need not condemn those who hold this view, though the mistake may be theirs, and the Jews may have been right. But if we take the popular, the Jewish, view as the right one, it is obvious that, though the cases become more awful, the cures become more significant and glorious. *All* disease cometh of evil, though it worketh for good. And as impure air and poisonous exhalations will

expose us to a spirit of sickness, an injurious vital tendency that enters in and mixes with our life; so the world of evil spirits around us, whose prince is "the prince of the power of the air," may shed on us noxious influences of an aërial kind, when yet the spirits themselves do not enter our frames as disturbing tenants. All evil is of the nature of disease, and its influence tends to disease; and if our world be open to the entry and assault of "spirits," they may do us no little harm without doing that which compels us even to acknowledge their existence. But they may do us *that* harm also. If in our Lord's day spirits, mischievous and cruel, were suffered to live in the bodies of men, occupying as intruders that house which should be exclusively the man's own, so might it be again.

We may not affirm that only the very sinful suffered thus. No doubt the effect of sin, men's own or that of their progenitors, upon the bodily constitution was such as to invite and facilitate the entry of "demons." But as the virtuous may be diseased now, in ways that tell of sin but not of their special sin; so the moral and

pious might be "possessed" then, and this their distress not be their punishment. Sometimes, perhaps often, however, the man had "prepared a place" for the fiend, by the indulgence of unholy passions, or by the negligence of a merely sensuous life. And why did the demons come? Because these fallen spirits, or spirits of the dead, as we may assume some of them to have been, liked the body they had lost better than the body they afterwards had, and were eager to be in flesh again. To do harm, to meddle, disturb, and tyrannize, affords pleasure, as we know, to a low class of men in this world. The like hateful occupation may, for aught we know, give pleasure to many an evil spirit.

But the demon gained more than the opportunity of molestation. He saw, through the eyes which he had blinded for their lawful owner; he heard, through the ears he had deafened: he refreshed and regaled his own dry hungry nature by appropriating the nervous substance of his victim's brain and frame. And that victim told the dreadful secret of his malady, by speaking as if he were two, or many; for the evil

spirits could make their personal presence felt in all its horror, and the sufferers knew that they were not alone, but that their enemy was with them. Sometimes they became entirely mad; and so "demoniac" has been thought to mean no more than "maniac." But it was not the madness that suggested the demon as its cause, but the demon that produced the madness as the effect of his presence.

By one of these cruel spirits this woman's young daughter was possessed. She leaves her daughter at home, and comes to Christ. He had wished to be private. But any good man, still more any good physician, still more the Saviour and Physician of souls and bodies, will let his privacy be disturbed by an urgent case. The poor mother finds where He is, and comes to Him, appealing to Him earnestly and falling at his feet. But He does not answer her appeal; why? Plainly, that his silence may presently cause her to show her whole soul in her tongue. They that long for an answer and a blessing will not lightly take silence for a refusal. Perhaps there was an expression in our Lord's face that

seemed to speak, though He was silent. To feel the urgency of our own claim, and the justice of our plea, helps us if we are making an appeal even to the doubtfully good. Such a plea, such a claim, must have force, we feel, if we do not distrustfully make too little of them. But if we have no doubt as to the worth and compassion of those before whom we plead, our trust in them, and our trust in the merits of our case, will alike determine us to persist.

But this woman's persistency did not please the disciples, who were encouraged by their Master's silence to propose that the petitioner should be dismissed. Dismissed! What, send her back to her daughter, for the demon to mock at her through her daughter's eyes and tongue? "Here, at least," the demon may think, "in this remote Canaanitish corner of the land, happily for us, there is no Saviour." So the wretched victim will have a worse time than ever, and the unhappy mother almost wish she might lose her reason, or her life, rather than see her such a spectacle any longer. Why, such a dismissal as this would have spoiled the Gospel, and con-

tracted the love of Jesus into the narrow dimensions befitting a merely Jewish Saviour.

"She *crieth* after us," said the disciples. But peace itself may be sought merely as an indulgence. We wish a quiet life. Why? Only perhaps because it is an idle and an easy one! Possibly, our Lord was in conversation with the disciples, and these cries disturbed the conversation. But Truth may not be displeased to have its good discourse interrupted, that a good action may be done. Shall we stop our ears at the cry of the poor and wretched, under the pretext that we have opened them to listen to the Truth? For what purpose does Truth address us, but that we may go away and do good? and *now* the opportunity for shewing mercy has come to us without our needing to seek it.

For cure, and redress, and every other kind of blessed relief, it is mostly necessary in this world to cry, and cry aloud; to persevere in our requests and attempts till somebody is disturbed and complains. "Send her away," said the disciples. And so disciples still say when any-

thing is sought that mars their present enjoyment; and specially if the seekers are of no consideration but an evil one. These good men knew not what spirit they were of. They had a better heart than they shewed. Their spirit just now was not the spirit of their lifetime. They must presently have been "grievously vexed" with themselves for having shewn so little pity. People who do not feel for others in a bad case have a bad spirit. But *they* think of the heathen as little better than a dog; and is such a holy thing as kindness to be given to a heathen? "We are not to help a *dog* against the devil, are we?" Jesus Christ will shew them what kind of heart this doggish person has.

So first He says, "I am not sent save unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." And to this she responds, saying nothing about Israel, "Lord, help *me*." You! but you are not of the house of Israel. No: but the Good Shepherd had other sheep that were not of that fold; and she is a lost sheep of this other, this foreign, flock. She felt more encouragement in what He said of "lost sheep" than discouragement

in what he said of "the house of Israel." "Help *me*," cries the woman. "What, *you*; it is not lawful to take the children's bread," He answered—speaking, as it were, according to the mind of the disciples—"and cast it to the dogs." But He spake thus, seeming to call her a dog, that she might shew she was not a dog. "Truth, Lord;" she answers, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table." And He replies, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

But what have we here? Is there anything more than the ready tongue of woman, of whom it is said, "You shall never take her without her answer, unless you take her without her tongue?" Is *this*, "faith," "great faith?" Is it not rather the persistency of affection? wise and witty pleading, made so ready and ingenious by intensity of feeling?

Certainly there is feminine quickness here; but there is much more. When Christ had spoken of "lost sheep," the helpless, the perishing, she had felt: "That is what we are, my daughter and I; and the wolf is on us in our

distress." Perhaps she had also thought, "Surely this good man, this noble man, will pity and rescue us." And now that he speaks of dogs who must not have children's bread, at once she thinks of dogs who pick up the children's crumbs. More than this: is not a crumb *let fall* for the dogs, kindly thrown to them? Shall not the Master of the House, caring much for his children, still care a little for the dogs? Shall there not be enough for the one, and yet something to spare for the other, because the table is plentiful? And shall not Jesus, the Prophet, caring first for his own people, care too for strangers? shall He not give them a crumb of mercy cheerfully? Is his store, as a Healer, less plentiful than the meat of a common table? He will not, surely, treat the stranger worse than He would treat a dog!

She thus reasons, with clear good sense; and bases her appeal to Him on the ground of a principle distinctly seen. In fact, she reasons after our Saviour's own manner. And the eminence of her faith is in this—that she bases her confidence as to something *greater* on what she

sees to be true in something *less*. Charity makes even the dogs welcome to a bit of the children's bread: much more will it make the stranger welcome to a share of Israel's blessing. It was precisely thus that our Lord argued. God clothes the grass; much more, then, shall He clothe you, O ye of little faith, if ye do not think so! God marks the sparrows, feeds the ravens; will He not, then, observe and provide for those who are of so much more value than sparrows and ravens? How much more is a man worth than a sheep, argued He, when He was claiming a free happy Sabbath for man. And if we see the greatness and yet simplicity of Christ's wisdom in reasoning thus, and rest confidently in the implied promise of his words; then our faith will be like this woman's—"great." She rose above distinctions of race even in admitting them. "Granted that we Greeks are but as dogs when compared with Israelites, we are at least as near to them as dogs can be to men. There are necessities common to them and to us; and shall not compassion be a bond between those who are already bound by necessity?"

Whenever we so understand a natural fact as to make spiritual application of it, winning from it an argument to strengthen our trust in God, we then shew the mind of faith. And if a little thing, so considered by us, yields us a reason invincibly strong why we should trust God, we then have great faith. Love gives the heart sensibility; and if by our own love we are able to feel and discern the love of God in the relations of life and the incidents of the world's natural history, then Nature and Experience become to us storehouses of the Divine promises. We can argue out consolation for ourselves in sure, simple, ways. Our thoughts within us cultivate trust in God as our *habitual disposition.* For us to rely on God simply and steadfastly, because of what we see to be true of Him, must surely be very acceptable to Him.

Our Lord's usual mode of reasoning might well resemble this woman's, for his confidence in God was perfect. Do you, said He, who are evil, give good gifts to your children; and shall not God, who is good, give you what you most want, his Good Spirit? Will even an unjust

judge, said He, yield to importunity; and shall not the righteous Judge regard the long waiting, and earnest constant desire, of those who importunately plead to Him? And whenever we make such a spiritual application of some natural fact divinely understood, we promote the elevation of both mind and life. Thus: if God cause his sun to shine for all, shall not the Sun of Righteousness have a blessing for all? If creatures lower than we are made for their own happiness as well as that of others; are not we too made, in like manner, for our own happiness? If we, as we grow wiser and kinder, are patient with one another's mistakes, shall not He much more be patient with us all? Such arguing is the arguing of Faith.

And Faith will, in this way, learn a lesson from the success of this Phœnician's appeal to our Lord. For, if God blessed and rewarded her faith with a daughter's cure, shall He not bless and reward that faith of ours which is perhaps seeking a child's salvation? Let us be wise to raise pleas for confidence in God from what we see of the course of Nature; and thus may we

quell fears which that very course of Nature is sure sometimes to engender. Let us also raise pleas for ourselves from the recorded examples of God's kindness to others. We do not read Scripture in the spirit of faith unless its narratives often say to us both, "Go ye, and do likewise," and "Come ye, and God will do likewise to you." Very happy will be the hour when it becomes natural to us to trust God; to trust Him always for what He has done once; to trust Him to the uttermost for what He has done in part; to trust Him as to the soul because of what He has done for the body; to trust Him as to what He will yet do for both soul and body because of what He has already done.

Sometimes Christ marvelled at the *faith* He met with; sometimes at the *unbelief*. Wonderful! He found greater faith in a Roman than He had found in Israel. Wonderful! He found greater faith in a heathen woman than in the woman of Samaria, who, at first, refused Him even a cup of cold water. "Surely, if you will let a dog lap water by your side, you should

give drink to a man from your vessel." *This* woman would have reasoned *so*.

We see, then, that faith is the taking hold of the truth of God with a living heart. If you desire anything good, and plead for it to God because of what you have seen of his goodness, you have faith. Group those truths together which the heart most wants, that it may rest and thrive, and that the man may hold up his head in hope, and hold on his way with a good courage,—and you have *the* faith. These truths are in Christ. He connects them and gives them unity. Faith is first the seeking of the heart, and then its finding. It seeks what it is confident is the only sufficient good—the loving holy favour of God. It wants *this;* and it finds it in Christ. Where there is the pure wish for God, as well as the deep need of Him,—there is faith. In unbelief there is the need, but not the wish.

Did this woman know her need of a Saviour? At least she read a Saviour's heart aright. It was in her to think well of God, and to take whatever testimonies of his goodness He gave

and use them as her staff of life. *She* would not forget her Benefactor. She went home expecting to find it even as Christ had said; and so she did find it—her daughter was free from the tormentor and peacefully at rest. Henceforth her life would become more grateful, more trustful even; and, in the best way she could, she would glorify the God of Israel.

And if our Lord saw the true faith of this heathen woman's heart, and gave it great praise; will He not see, and praise, "like precious faith," wheresoever it is? Those whom the disciples may esteem no better than dogs, expecting nothing from them, the Master may highly honour, finding more in them than in many of his disciples.

In this case we may be sure the disciples were both abashed and instructed. Let us be abashed and instructed with them, if we have talked of those "outside the pale of the Church" with contempt or disparagement. Those who are behind us in privilege may be before us in character. Men are raised by recognising the best that is in them, not by remembering the worst

only. The holy germ of faith may exist in the outcast and the unbeliever. God values and will cherish it; and we should imitate Him.

And, if instructed with the disciples, let us be comforted with the woman. Her trouble was the keener because of her maternal love; but this keen distress gave earnestness and importunity to her faith: and sweet indeed was the blessing and the praise it won. Even such a cure was sweeter for such a commendation.

Our own heart, or the heart of some one dear to us, may be infested with a spirit of gloom or fear, or discontent; if demons are not in us, their dispositions may be: and we, or our friends, are grievously vexed. Let us cry to God, nor fear to offend Him with our loudness, if only we desire to please Him with our faith. We may say to Him, "*This* hast Thou wrought; wilt Thou not, then, give me this other boon also?" Counting up the mercies of God, let us assure our hearts before Him by reasoning of these, and say: "If the Lord has shewn us so much good, and led us so far on, and been so plainly thoughtful for us in so many ways; will He not

now lighten our darkness, or make it bearable? Will He not pluck away the thorn from our flesh, or give us patience? Will He not disperse the spiritual clouds that overshadow our souls, or grant us rain from them to make the sunshine that follows useful?" Faith pleads for mercies, longing for them, and staying itself on good simple reasons for expecting them: when they are given, it rejoices in them, and, ever mindful of their Source, looks from them to that Source, and augurs fresh mercies thence as they shall be needed.

Prayer before Sermon.

O THOU who art the Giver of every good and perfect gift, for our own present share of Thy bounties, we thank Thee; and chiefly for that hope of entire resemblance to Thee which Thou hast made ours, by the Gospel. Ever may the light of day—so free, so pleasant—tell us of the light of truth—as free, and even sweeter. Ever may the rest of night tell us of that peace, that conscious peace, which keeps the hearts of those that trust Thee.

Thou hast made man a living soul upon the earth, that he should become an ever-living, ever-happy, spirit in Thy presence. Thou hast made all nations of one blood, and dost regard all with the same mercy. But to us Thou hast revealed the one Saviour; on us Thou hast bestowed the teaching and comforting Spirit. O that we may live according to our privilege, ever counting it as part of our privilege, as knowing Thee, to think hopefully and compas-

sionately of our fellow-men. May we know ourselves too well to despise others. Thou showest us, by the bright contrast of Thy perfect Word with our imperfect life, how much evil there still is in our hearts. But Thy Spirit, that enters and works on our spirit through Thy Word, makes us conscious of holy purposes and affections. We, who are not good, seek good. And shall we, who have evil in us notwithstanding our good, despise others? Shall we, who have good in us notwithstanding our evil, despair of them? O enable us to believe in, and to rejoice in, Thine all-embracing mercy. And when we think of lands, and of peoples, that seem forsaken of Thee, may we feel confident that in due time Thine everlasting goodness shall be revealed in them also.

But may ours not be a careless, an idle, hope. Because all goodness, even the feeblest, testifies of Thee, and is Thy gift, leading to Thee, may we, before whose eyes, Jesus Christ the Righteous has been set forth, crucified in love that evil might die, be in earnest to receive large measures of Thy Good Spirit.

We examine ourselves before Thee, and ask, Do we indeed believe that what is good is strong eternally? Do we indeed desire that the very life of God, which makes Him blessed, should make us blessed? Do we read in all his lesser gifts clear evidence that He will bestow on us his best gift? Great God! it is a great thing we need of Thee, yet nothing less will satisfy us, and nothing less will it satisfy Thee for us to have. We need a holy eternal life like Thine.

O Thou Brightness without shadow, Thou steadfast eternal Love, Thou most perfect Joy, Thou most undisturbed and most pure Peace, we adore Thee, King of Excellency, Father of Spirits, God of Grace and Comfort. In Thine unspeakable compassion, pity and help us. By Thine everlasting strength invigorate and sustain us. O let the soft and penetrating beam of Thy wisdom shine in our souls, till no part is dark, shine in the world around us till all things testify of Thee.

Enable us to reason upwards, from the things of earth to the things of heaven. No outward good is there but speaks of an inward one to

those that will listen; no bodily benefit but tells of a spiritual one: no tender regard of Thine for our frame, which is but dust, but speaks of as tender a regard for our spirits.

O that we might so know Thee, that faith might be, not the act alone, but the temper, of our souls. Thou art to be trusted; and Thou only art worthy to be trusted with entire unwavering confidence. Vexations of the world, infirmities of the flesh, sinful workings of the spirit, trouble us. We err, we change, we suffer. But Thou changest not; and Thine unchanging love is with us in One who suffered for our sins. "We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with his most precious blood." Quicken our faith that Thou wilt indeed help us. Thou hast given a pledge, and it abides. In Thee, therefore, will we be confident.

For all Thy people, in whom Thou art forming Thine image; for all who are passing through life's perilous trial; for all who know that, unless Thou save them, they cannot be saved, we make, too, our prayer. Thy king-

dom come in the awakening hope of many. Thy sun arise and shine through the tears of their repentance. Thy glory be revealed in the good deeds they do, and the good words they speak, as taught of Thy Spirit. Speed Thine own work, O God; honour Thy name. Draw the stranger to Thyself, his home. Give to the hungry Thyself, his food. Overcome the varied and desperate evils of the world, by Thy more varied omnipotent good. Destroy Thou them that destroy the earth — even Hatred, and Falsity, and Envy, and Selfishness.

Thou art casting out evil spirits from man. We acknowledge, we celebrate Thy working. And, with a thankful heart, end cheerfully this our prayer, because we present it in His name who has done so much already, and through whom Thou wilt do all: even Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

GOD of Compassion, how much of Thine own tenderness hast Thou revealed in the pitying faithful hearts of women! How often hast Thou reproved and amended the ways of man, by the example of woman's confiding and persisting love. We thank Thee that the Scripture Record is illuminated and endeared by the words and deeds of believing women. Thou hadst among the daughters of Israel those who were also daughters of God; but Thou hadst other daughters who loved Thee, that were not of Abraham's race, but only of Abraham's faith.

Thou, God, seest the heart. Thou acceptest its appeal to Thee. Thou wilt satisfy its yearning for Thee. Thou honourest and rewardest it for thinking good of Thee. In all nations Thou hast had believing sons and daughters, whom Thou wilt, at the last, the great, day, acknowledge before the very chiefest of Thine

elect. From the far East and the far West, from the frosty North and the burning South, they shall assemble. May we meet them.

Lord, increase our faith, that faith which supports us in the day of trial, and prepares us for the day of revelation. Many are the outcasts of the world whom Thou wilt in nowise cast out. Many are they who do but timidly venture to Thee for a crumb, to whom Thou breakest the plentiful bread of life. Many are the last who shall be first. We are not the last in privilege: O that we may not be the last in service. And if we feel that spiritual sorrows and spiritual wickednesses are specially against us, or those whom we love: O that our faith may be special and great, because of the great vexation endured and the great relief besought.

However we now come to Thee, of this we are sure, that Thou wilt not send us away empty, but dismiss us with Thy blessing: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eleventh Service.

Lesson:

Matt. vii.

Luke ix. 43—62.

Luke xiv. 25—35.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 25 Hymn, 2 Book.

Rivulet, 64 Hymn.

Dr. Watts, 44 Hymn, 1 Book, 2 Part.

XI.

THE STRAIT GATE.

OCTOBER 9, 1864.

"*Enter ye in at the strait gate.*"—Matt. vii. 13.

"BUT we thought," perhaps some one may say, "that the message of the Gospel which preachers have to deliver was a smiling invitation; these words sound like grave urgent counsel."

That is what they are—grave, urgent, counsel. If any one said to you in a soft sentimental tone, "Make money," you would be ready even to laugh; not because you consider money-making an unattractive occupation, which indeed it is not, but because you know that it is not easy to make money. You do not need to be told to do this thing, but only *how* to do it. There are many things we are willing enough to do, if we

only knew how to do them. But there are others we do not like to do, although we ought to do them; partly because of difficulties, which might nevertheless be overcome, and partly because the ends proposed, the rewards offered, are not attractive to us.

Of course every one to whom we should say, "There is another life after this; would you like it to be a happy one?" would answer, "Certainly I should." But if no one expects to get a comfortable place here without taking trouble; why should any one expect to get a comfortable place hereafter without taking any? The Gospel has no invitation like *this:* "Come, all of you, however unclean in your person, however negligent in your apparel, however sensual in your appetites, however rude, ignorant, and foolish in your characters, and make yourselves at home in the happy heaven of God." No: "I counsel you," says the voice of the Wise Spirit, "to buy the instruction of which you have need, to make sure, by preparation, of your place in the kingdom of heaven."

Besides, the good news of God, the invitation

it gives, the counsel it urges, have respect not merely to another life hereafter, but to another life *here;* a life, indeed, evermore blessed in its hope than in its daily experience, yet truly blessed in its every deed now, even as summer and winter husbandry, that have the hope of "harvest home" for their support, have many pleasures mingling with their honourable cares.

"Be right with God, seek his friendship, do his will," *such* is the counsel addressed to you, and by the very lips that say; "Receive now the forgiveness of sins, the friendly help of Christ upon your journey, and the hope of life everlasting." And what the preacher seeks is this: To set forth attractively the present and eternal good offered by God in Jesus Christ; to shew faithfully the difficulties that must be met in accepting and retaining the large benefit; and ever so to state the free invitation as to dispose men to heed the urgent counsel; and so to give that counsel that every one who heeds it may be cheered by the encouraging invitation.

And, surely, when we say, "Enter ye in at the strait gate," if one word disheartens, another

comforts. The word "strait" perhaps brings us to a pause; but the word "enter" beckons us forward. We should not be urged to "enter" were entry impossible. If the entrance looks narrow, it is less difficult than it looks. Some have been emboldened to attempt the passage by their fear of the pursuer behind them; and thus their foe has become their friend. Others have been so animated by a view of the country beyond,—for through the gate you can not only see the path, but the distant paradise,—that they have made haste to obey God's commandments, and have found themselves in "the way" almost without thinking of the straitness of "the gate." Draw but near enough, then, to look through the gate, and you may be drawn onward to make trial of the path.

Every one feels a truth in our Lord's words about the two ways; the one, easy and crowded, yet neither safe nor honourable; the other, difficult and unfrequented, and yet the best way, indeed the only right one. But though we all feel we have truth here, yet we may treat this old Scripture saying very much as we do an old weapon

of which, when we look at it, we cry; "Ah, you were sharp and strong once; you have been wanted in the world; but you are not needed now: rest where you are; ours is a quiet time; and should we ever have to fight, we will find new weapons, of a better make." And even if we treat the words as important, and make much of them, we may call *that* the Gate of God which is only the gate of a Church that has forsaken God; and *that* the Way of Life which will never lead any one to heaven, but only lead those who take it into the dry and formal territory of the Pharisees. A man may go to heaven very safely, and even very comfortably, along the way of narrow circumstances. But the way of narrow-mindedness has difficulties which it "came not into God's heart" to put in anybody's way; and which repel the simple, who, fearing that this is really the way to heaven, turn aside sorrowing. Paul spoke of the "straitest sect of his religion;" and, no doubt, this sect made the Way and the Gate alike repulsive to many of the common people. It is no wonder that sometimes the multitude has forsaken the ways that

lead to Church, and goes only along the way that leads to the Market and the Playhouse. Though the multitude is never very wise, it is yet sometimes wise enough to reject what is deceptively offered it in Wisdom's name.

But if we neither regard these words as an old weapon now disused, nor pervert them so as to make them teach that a religion which repels is nevertheless, and even on that account, the right religion; admitting their truth, we may yet feel some perplexity as to its application. We must look about, then, to find a gate into the meaning of these words; and when we have found one, we must go along the pathway of our thought with care and steadiness.

Who shall help us to the meaning of Christ's words? He Himself shall help us. He Himself travelled on the narrow path, when He might have taken the broad one. And did He not call Himself both a door and a way, saying, "I am the door," "I am the way?" He who, quickened and strengthened by another's example, walks as that other walked, does as

he did, hopes as he hoped, and leaves the crowd as he left it, makes that other his "way." And of *this* we are very sure, that Christ did not come to make it harder than before for men to attain true happiness. He came to revive, and to augment, our hope; and not so to choose the very few out of the very many that the many must be hopelessly rejected. He was "lifted up," He said, "to draw all men" unto Him, not to drive all men in terror away from Him. And surely his disciple Paul spoke in his own spirit when he said, "God willeth that all men should be saved."

Christ, then, is a Door at which all men may knock and gain entry; a Way so expressly provided for all that even the feeble traveller need not fear to venture on the journey. And yet, when Christ addressed the multitudes, did He not warn as well as invite, and tell them that they must consider their means before they built their tower, and count their soldiers before they ventured to face the foe? And though He dismissed no applicant with blank refusal, yet some, who came to Him confidently, departed

sorrowing. How could the rich young Ruler go through a gate as narrow as a needle's eye? and how could the multitude follow a path which led them into contentions with their kinsfolk, and quite away from the favour of the rich and powerful?

On the one hand, then, we have a Teacher who invites us to trust in and follow Him as a Saviour; and, on the other, a Saviour who offers us life, and yet, as a Teacher, instructs us that we must overcome many difficulties if we would gain it.

How can we reconcile these things? He who spoke of the Strait Gate, we say, Himself went into the way of Righteousness thereby. He who told us of the narrow way, walked therein, knew its sorrows, was acquainted with its griefs. He chose the narrow way when He might have taken the broad one and have travelled it with a most able guide and companion by his side, and a most brilliant end before Him. We often speak of a brilliant career. What career so bright with outward victory as Christ's would have been, if He had accepted the magnificent

proposals of the Devil? His way would have been broad, and thronged with admiring attendants. But He took the way of goodness instead of the way of greatness. He went down among the poor instead of up among the proud. He sacrificed Himself to others instead of others for Himself. He told men what they needed to hear, not what they liked to hear. He amazed the Church by setting it aside. He lived as if nothing but righteousness had any claim on Him, nothing but doing good any attractions for Him. He associated with the outcast, not ashamed of his company. He accepted plain fare and a laborious life without one longing look at easy seats and plentiful tables. He evaded no task, denied no truth. Defenceless as He seemed, He left no side unguarded. He did nothing through mere hardness; but, though resolute, was tender. Not embittered by hatred, He was nevertheless grieved by it; He went on hopefully, but He sighed as He passed on. Never weary of well-doing, He yet felt to the utmost the burden and the heat of the day. He bound Righteousness to his brow as a diadem,

and set Goodness on the throne of his heart. And, faithful to his heart's sovereign, He brought righteousness safely through the dreadful shock of battle that rose round Him, to destroy Him, and to cast his glory to the ground.

Christ, as we said, then, chose goodness. And the mighty work He did was this: He made "the way" that was impassable to any but Himself, passable to others who should follow in his footsteps. By taking the way, He became the way; by taking the way of righteousness, He became the way of salvation. Even in the perils of ordinary life, if any one man will dare to take a new course, and it prove a successful one, many will dare to follow him. And he usually benefits us in two manners; he makes our obstacle less, and our courage greater.

When, then, Jesus Christ says invitingly to all, "Follow me," speaking as a Saviour; but says also to each, "Take up your cross, and, carrying *that*, follow me"—teaching us that the way is hard, we do not feel that urgent counsel is inconsistent with cheering invitation. We

can reconcile the words that seem discouraging with the words that so much encourage. For every one of us there still remains his own difficulty; but our Saviour has so encountered and overcome the great difficulties that beset human nature in its progress to perfection and blessedness, that every one of us has a good hope of success through Him. Not only are obstacles removed and courage imparted, so that we *can* do what we could not, and *will* dare what we would not; but we are assured of an enabling power, even Christ's Spirit bestowed on us by God, and an unfailing protection, even an Almighty Providence ever working around us. Christ is more than an Example shining from the past; He is a Power working in the present. The thing which He set Himself to do, He did—perfected humanity in holiness and power by a complete personal conquest over evil. This is the work *done*, so glorious in itself, so grateful to God, so auspicious for man. And Salvation is the doing in mankind, the doing in each man, of what Christ did in Himself. What He did *for* us

becomes the efficient instrument of what He does *in* us.

Let each man cleave, then, to the hope he has by reason of the Eternal God having done in human nature what needs to be done in each of us. Let our endeavours be made "in the Spirit." Let the success of Him who humbled Himself for us, and then was exalted for us also, be the guarantee of our hope; and let our hope be animated by his example in its hearty, constant, and unpretending loving-kindness and rectitude.

In speaking thus, it is evident we assume that to live a spiritual life does involve a great deal of trouble and care and labour. Yes; there is no heaven to be had without sacrifice and renunciation. Effort is always being made to lessen some of the difficulties attendant on a religious, *i.e.*, a good and godly life. But it cannot be true that we, the followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises, have ourselves no need of patience and are called to no good fight of faith. For them there was a furnace of affliction: is our

gold so pure that for us no hot purifying fires are needed? What says Milton, addressing a "Virtuous Young Lady?"

> "Lady, that in thy prime of earliest youth
> Wisely hast shunn'd the broad way and the green,
> And with those few art eminently seen
> That labour up the hill with heavenly truth,
> The better part with Mary and with Ruth
> Chosen thou hast."

For gentle hearts, then, and tender limbs there is an upward way which, because upward, is tiring, and, because tiring and rough, the way of the few.

And what do we read of in an old Greek allegory composed by a disciple of Socrates? We read of "*the little door*, and *the way* leading to it, *which few frequent*, but which is nevertheless the way to true instruction."

There is a striking passage, too, in a Jewish book of great antiquity, which we may quote here, though whether it was written before our Lord's time or after has been disputed.

"Up, said He to me, and hear the words that I am come to tell thee. And I said, Speak on, my God. Then said He unto me, The sea is set

in a wide place that it might be deep and great. But put the case the entrance were narrow and like a river; who then could go into the sea to look upon it, and to rule it? *If he went not through the narrow, how could he come into the broad?* There is also another thing: A city is builded, and set upon a broad field, and is full of all good things. The entrance thereof is narrow, and is set in a dangerous place to fall, like as if there were a fire on the right hand, and on the left a deep water; and one only path between them both, even between the fire and the water, so that there could but one man go there at once. If this city now were given to a man for an inheritance, if he never shall pass the danger set before it, how shall he receive the inheritance? And I said, It is so, Lord. Then said He unto me, Even so also is Israel's portion. Because for their sake I made the world; and when Adam transgressed my statutes, then was decreed that which now is done. Then were the entrances of this world made narrow, full of sorrow and travail; they are but few and evil, full of perils

and very painful. For the entrances of the elder world were wide and sure, and brought immortal fruit. *If then they that love labour not to enter these strait and vain things, they can never receive those that are laid up for them.*"

Such are Wisdom's lessons from age to age. Through the narrow we come into the broad; by a narrow intricate channel into the wide sea full of riches; by a narrow and perilous pathway into the great city, so stately, so secure. The attainment of true knowledge, the performance of true work, fidelity to "pure religion," are not easy. Commencement and continuance have alike their difficulty. The gate is strait; the way narrow.

But in order to obtain many a state of advantage in which we may "walk at liberty"—find, that is, our path pleasantly wide and the country round us pleasantly open:—is anything more requisite than exact careful attention at the outset of our endeavour, and exact careful regard to our own course as we go along?

No: often this is enough. Perhaps all of us

can read a printed page as easily as if we were rolling in a rapid chariot upon a broad level road. But the Alphabet was our "strait gate," and along the "narrow way" that our Spelling-Book opened before us we had to go, for a long time, slowly and carefully. If we have learned a handicraft, we had our "strait gate" and our "narrow way," skilful as we may now be. Many are the tales, and still more numerous the listeners that like to hear them, which tell us of people who began business with a shilling or a sovereign in their pocket, who worked for years more than their twelve hours daily, and became the founders of great mercantile firms. These men have reached success as their goal; but their "strait gate" was penury, and their "narrow way" laborious industry. In most courses of life we have our special first troubles; but our trial is not over when our entry has been made: we cannot proceed without a steady purpose, a good courage, and a staff. And no man can be, nor can reasonably expect to be, a Christian, without the same *attention* at the

outset, and *considerateness* on the course, as are demanded of him if he would be merchant or mechanic, artist or man of science, discoverer or patriot, or even if he would learn to read a book.

But more than attention at first, and care afterwards, are required for the spiritual life—to be a true Christian, and indeed to be a true man in any worthy department of human activity. In our Lord's day the religion that was popular and prevalent was not good, but evil. Indeed, "popular religion" is a phrase that sounds very much as if we should speak of impure purity. Even popular science is not always held in high repute by those whose knowledge is exact and extensive. Yet to make that accessible to the many which only the few have hitherto enjoyed is a most worthy work. If you see any way of making a good thing popular at the expense of a little trouble, pray enter at once on that way, through the strait and icy gate of disfavour which you are sure to see before you. But do not adulterate a good thing to make it popular; *that* is to travel on the broad way. "Few" and

"true" are words that seem not only naturally to rhyme, but naturally to go together.

> "Thy words, O Lord, so pure and true,
> Are heard and heeded but by few."

And yet "the world" is a large expression; and no less an one satisfies God. And in the majestic and exhilarative heavenly scenes of the Book of Revelation, we have, not the *few* clothed beautifully and singing joyously, but a multitude whom no man can number. So we expect confidently that there will be broad ways at last, every one of them being a highway of God, crowded with travellers. Meanwhile, the few must lead the many. And in order to lead them, they must first of all *leave* them. Only that "religion" which is unpopular at first is fit to become popular at last. For the sake of the multitude we must differ from them. When Jesus Christ was alone, praying on the mountain, what interest had the multitude in his solitary prayers? The very greatest. They thought not of Him, but He thought of them. When he took a way so terrible that even his most faithful friends forsook Him and fled, how were the

multitude benefited? Shortly after those worst hours, all the disciples returned, and even the crowd began to follow Him "fully."

The renunciation of much that others accept, and even the abandonment of much that, but for the work in hand, you would retain, may be required of you. This renunciation is a "strait gate;" and "separateness," though it be separateness from sinners—and some sinners are pleasant people—is a "narrow way."

Every man may be, and indeed must be, if he "would be saved," his own "strait gate." And every man is by nature his own "broad way;" and if he will but ascend a mound of thought by the wayside, though it be but of small elevation, he may have a clear view—we will not call it a fine one—of the City of Destruction to which this broad way leads. Follow the stream of inclination, content yourself with the easy average of the many in your commercial and religious behaviour, and you will get on fast—in the wrong way. Never resist hearsay to follow evidence, nor flattery to follow conscience, nor inclination to follow truth, and you will go easily

on—to destruction. But he that finds himself an obstruction to himself, and overcomes this, will have *himself* as a tried friend and companion on his lonely path. And the narrow way, which winds into the rocks, will wind through them and out of them. Sometimes the narrow way lies *through* the crowd, and not away from it into the wilderness. How carefully we watch against an erring, and even an ungraceful, step on a path so painfully exposed to the gaze of many, and these often, unfriendly eyes! But we must go where truth bids. Christ was alone amid the crowd in his unruffled wisdom, before He was alone on the cross in the grasp of death, man's enemy. His "narrow way" lay through the populous city before it entered the valley of the shadow of death. There are other narrow ways along our streets than the pavements. One man riding in his coach, may be travelling on the narrow way of honour and duty; and the foot-travellers may be hastening on at rapid pace upon the broad road. *Now* it may be the poor, and *now* the rich, that is in the wrong way, or in the right.

But it may be asked, "Can we find our own strait gate by seeking it?"

Yes, we can; and we can also avoid many strait gates through which we had no particular call to pass. Suppose a man stays near a rising tide till, through his carelessness, he is nearly surrounded with water; he may have but a narrow limit both of time and of ground for effecting his escape. Often, in embarrassed affairs, the one thing plainly right to be done is the hardest thing to do, and the very thing of all others that there ought to have been no need of doing. However, now, it is our only gate; so we had better go through, and not without thankfulness.

The confession of an error, the avowal of a conviction, economy of money or time, abandonment of habit, are often "strait gates," which stand quite plainly before us, and need no *finding*. But our Saviour speaks of men "*not finding*" the strait gate. And He Himself, as the Teacher of Israel, was a gate that many of his countrymen failed to find. They could not see that He would lead them to welfare. Had He

been a strong soldier, He would have seemed to them the broad plain way to prosperity! He that notices a yellow stain in the rocks, and does not perceive that it means gold, misses a gate. A suggestion comes, a proposal is made, tidings are brought: "There is a gate here," says one man; but another "cannot see it." For all of us there are gates we cannot miss seeing; and for all of us there are gates which we may overlook, and so miss a great good, even the greatest. Many fail to find their gate because they are looking for the grandly difficult rather than the humbly difficult. Naaman would have done a "hard thing" to rid himself of his leprosy; but merely to dip in Jordan,—that was to demean himself!

Repentance is an uninviting gate, open to everybody; and it introduces us into the way of Faith which, though narrow, is a real pass through the mountain range that separates earth from heaven, sterility from fertility, confusion from beautiful order. Strait gates and narrow ways are well known to the mariner and even to the pleasure-taker. The mariner

enters his harbour, perhaps, through a mouth almost choked with sand: there is but one opening, one gate, through the sand, and this does but open through an intricate channel, along which he must go carefully if he would be safe in the haven. Pleasure-takers, attracted by the amusing or the terrible, wait and struggle at railway doors, and then make their journey contented, though uncomfortable, in the slow crowded train.

We often make narrow entrances through which but *one at a time* can pass, that we may examine his ticket and see whether he has a right to pass. And, be sure, though we may look respectable on the fashionable broadway of World or Church, we cannot enter Heaven as those who pass in a crowd. God deals with souls as men deal with sovereigns, which they examine and weigh one by one.

Prayer before Sermon.

O THOU in whom there is no darkness at all, shew us our way, and cheer us thereon by Thine own clear light. For each of us Thou hast appointed his path of life; and as one event must happen to us all when nature's term is reached, so one good end awaits us, if trusting and led by Thee. May we consider the end, that we may not grow weary of the way: and whenever we follow with good hope the light of our own understanding, may we remember that this light, which shineth in us, was kindled by Thee.

Brighten, we beseech Thee, the light of our understanding heart. Father of mercies, grant us this mercy, that it may not fall dark within us; and, whilst the outer world is gay or busy in nature's light, our souls and all that is within us become wrapt in a cold and a spectral gloom. Hast Thou not called Thy sons and daughters "children of the day," and ordained that there

shall be light in their hearts and dwellings when Egypt around them "is darkened?" We beseech Thee that we may know by experience how blessed is the rising of the day-star on our spirit; how safely we may travel, even a hard way, when Thy truth, with its light of glory, goes before us.

O our God, days go on: do we make progress? Events come: do we learn their lesson, and obtain their blessing? Thou knowest. But we are not here to lament hopelessly, even if we are, to repent sincerely. Had we but wiser hearts, we should have wiser and more fruitful hours. Did we but prize more what Thou hast given us, we should see more readily what Thou art offering us, seek more earnestly the benefits that lie hidden in a country where Thou hast placed us, that we may explore it and find them. Now would we ask wisdom, now pray for revived zeal, now receive Thine animating Spirit, that, considering where we are, we may make haste to obey Thy commandment, and go up higher, go on further.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that

great Shepherd, that great and suffering Captain, if any of us have allowed the light of life to fail, and are as sheep wandering on the bleak dark mountains, seek our souls; shelter them; heal their pain: then lead us forth anew into the green pastures. Are not our Lord's sympathies perfect, as his sufferings were great? Our heart shall not be troubled, for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust. O that the word of Thy Gospel may this night sound cheerfully, arousing those that sit as in the dust, with drooping heads, and giving them new hope and courage.

Captain of Salvation, call each of us to follow Thee. Shew us Thy wounds; shew us Thy crown. Shew us the bright sword of the Spirit; shew us the strong shield of Faith. Thou too, when Thou wast one of us, didst say of our God, "I will put my trust in Him." Give us trust like Thine, that we may patiently walk in Thy way, with good courage fight in Thy warfare, doing all things because Thou hast strengthened us.

Careful Shepherd, victorious Captain, we plead

to Thee for pity in our wanderings, and pasturage in our rest; for reviving water when, wounded, we are thirsty, and words of hope to urge us on when, timorous, we fall behind.

Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, that the battle may be to the weak, who is strong in faith; and success to the simple, who is patient through hope in Thy promise. Thanks to Thee, who hast so often given plenty to the needy that have waited on Thee by industry; and truth to the perplexed who have waited on Thee by study. Thanks to Thee, who hast enabled the humble to discern goodness, though appearing in a rude poor dress; and to know and avoid evil, though apparelled in a beguiling robe. By those who seek and trust Thee, Thou hast ever been found. Their obscurity Thou hast turned to daylight; out of straits Thou hast brought them to a wealthy place: the narrow path Thou hast broadened for their feet when once Thou hast proved their heart faithful. Thou hast given them good at their latter end, according to the days wherein Thou hadst afflicted them; and for poverty and shame, they have received glory

and abundance. Shew us Thy way with man—even *this*, Thy way, that we may aright order our way toward Thee. May we close our ear to the soft voice of the false prophet, who tells us of a smooth way; and open our ear to the grave voice of the true prophet, who tells us of a sure one.

God of the multitude, as well as of the little flock of Thy disciples, multiply true prophets, we beseech Thee, for the multitude's sake. Make Thy disciples guides of the people. May they discover those gates of effort which lead into the ways of progress, and shew them to the crowd. And, O, be Thou our life, and the world's life, that we may not fear to make Thee our way. Hitherto Thou hast helped us; thus far Thou hast brought us. Give us a good morrow, and many good morrows, whose shining mornings shall open into days of good work done for Thee. Temper Thou their heat; make their burden bearable: encourage us with lesser rewards, and sustain us with the prospect of our rest: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer after Sermon.

BLESSED be Thou, Lord God of the aged, who tell us, "We have learned by experience;" and of infants whom Jesus took into his arms, saying, Of such is my Kingdom. Long, long seems the pathway from infancy to the hoary head; but Thou hast a blessing for the beginning, and a richer blessing for the close. May we be the wiser for the legacy of experience and example which our fathers have left us; and the more hopeful because some are ever commencing anew that journey through the world by which Thou leadest many sons unto glory.

Thou hast appointed unto each man his own task and way. For each there are deceivers of whom he must specially be beware. For each there are half-veiled entrances to good which, seeking, he may find. Let not the thicket, which for a while hid the door, dismay us when once we see the door through its thorns. Let not the sweetness of "all kinds of music," the music of

our own praises, the music of festive bells, cause us to hail the idols of the hour with shouts and homage. Teach us to watch that we lose not good, nor be ensnared by evil; and to watch as helpers one of another. Few are the ways that we must travel quite alone. In these may we willingly, even if it be timidly, travel. But thankfully may we accept good company on a good road; and readily may we render unto others what we may soon need some one to render unto us. May we be ready with encouragement, compassion, and kindly allowance for fellow travellers.

And, O Thou who didst keep those that were Thy chosen, and pray for them that their faith might not fail, keep us, we beseech Thee, that no pains of righteousness, no pleasures of iniquity, may separate us from Thee, and cause us to abandon the way of life. There is a way which seemeth right to the world, but its end is death. There is a way which seemeth wrong to the world, but its end is life. This way be ours, the way of righteousness.

May our house be builded in that street of the

City which spiritually is called Straight; and at its door may we often stand, instructing travellers that would go right upon their ways.

Bless, both to to-day's good and to-morrow's, this our worship and meditation, for Jesus Christ's sake, we beseech Thee. Amen.

Twelfth Service.

Lesson:

Luke xi. 1—13.

xviii. 1—14.

xxii. 39—46.

Hymns:

Dr. Watts, 84 Psalm, vv. 1, 3, 4, 6.

31 Hymn, 1 Book.

139 Hymn, 2 Book.

XII.

ST. LUKE ON PRAYER.

OCTOBER 30, 1864.

WE are so accustomed to listen to sermons from particular texts, that a text seems to us essential to a sermon. And yet, why should it be thought so? The consideration of this question will lead us to see that there are some very good reasons for the practice with which we are so familiar; and yet that it is but one of the "commandments of men," and not binding on us under all circumstances.

The words of the preacher are not mainly expressive of his own opinion; he does not chiefly give us his own advice: but he dispenses truths which he has received, and which are contained in the Scripture, and applies exhortations whose force he himself feels, and with which the Scripture furnishes him. And his religious ad-

dress is prefaced with a text because, by what *he* says, he would direct us to what *God* says. He takes some one Divine saying, and if what he speaks concerning it be right, then it is the root of which his discourse is an outgrowth. Or, again, he takes some sentiment or statement of the Scripture, and if what he speaks concerning it be sensible and useful, he recommends to our increased esteem the Volume whose contents are so instructive. Or, again, he takes but a small portion of a great Book, the meaning of which, however, is quite sufficient to form for us one lesson, and thus *breaks* for us the bread of life, and fixes our attention on what may engage it without oppressing it. Or, yet again, in selecting some very important subject for discourse, which is "briefly comprehended" in the few words of a single text, he takes us, as it were, to an elevated summit from which, though it occupy but a small space, we can survey, easily and impressively, the beautiful country that lies around.

Texts, then, may serve to remind us that it is God's word which we should regard rather than

man's. They become the means of shewing us the productive power of that Word, inasmuch as out of little seeds goodly trees of discourse often spring. They afford us specimens as of the gold and jewels in which the Scripture country is so rich. They enable us to take our spiritual journey by stages adapted to our strength; and they allow and assist us to obtain a general and leisurely view of that around us which it concerns us to know. The admirable fulness of Scripture permits us thus to divide it into texts; and for our easiest and best profiting it is usually desirable that we should so divide it.

But, obviously, any method of instruction that does not disconnect the speaker from the Scripture, and that serves to illustrate and recommend its divine truths, may be allowable. And it may not only be allowable, but advisable, sometimes to depart from the textual plan. For the Scripture is not a book of shreds; nor, as we unfold it, does it resemble an unrolled pattern-book. A picture woven in tapestry is composed of very many threads. We might take one of them, say a yellow thread, and shew how

bright its hue, and tell how many similar threads the picture contained, and describe the nature of the dye that gave it its colour; and all this would be interesting and useful. But, in seeing the thread, you would not see the picture; and in learning thus much about it, you would learn but little about the picture, though you might indeed be prepared to admire it the more when you saw it. Sometimes, texts are used only as these threads might be. But, remember, Scripture has its pictures, and not merely threads of which pictures may be made. So, too, though it has samples as of the stuffs out of which spiritual clothing may be made, now for winter wear, now for summer, now for working-day, and now for holiday uses, it also presents us with examples of men actually wearing the robes of righteousness and the garments of praise.

The more thoroughly and variously we study the Scripture, the richer will be our reward. We should seek to become acquainted with spiritual things in their grouping and connection. And this evening we will occupy ourselves with an

attempt to group and connect together lessons which St. Luke gives us concerning Prayer. And as for every sermon a text may be found as motto, take as such a motto these words from the Evangelist—they are our Saviour's words, and occur in Luke xxi. 36—"*Pray always.*" The whole verse is this: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Our Lord had spoken of perils that were certain to come, and their coming would be sudden. Let those, then, who believed what He said and professed to be his disciples, be on their guard. They must watch; but they would have neither courage nor patience for their watching, if they did not pray. Let them "*pray always*," in the daylight as well as in the dark, when all seemed quiet as well as when they heard a sound as of the enemy approaching.

People *must breathe* always, even in their sleep. They are not, and need not be, *speaking* always; but when a word is wanted, there is the breath

ready to give it articulate sound. People talk even in their sleep, if their heart is very full and their rest disturbed. Let spiritual life be an ever breathing life; its affection, which is the essence of its prayer, always alive: utterance *then* will be frequent and hearty, and even if in slumbrous hours this be incoherent, the heart will show itself through the words as a humble heart, honestly purposing to wait for God and to serve Him.

Now, refreshed with this text as by a bit of the bread of instruction and a draught of the water of comfort, let us go through the Gospel of Luke and notice what is said of prayer. But how shall we do this? Suppose yourselves to have a copy of the Gospel before you, and a pencil in your hand; then, looking carefully through the Gospel from beginning to end, you mark the passages that refer to prayer. "But we should miss some of them?" Possibly so; but, then, you would certainly notice most of them, and a second examination would show you those you had not seen at first. "But would it," you ask, "naturally occur to any one to notice the lessons

St. Luke contains respecting prayer rather than those which the other Evangelists give?" To a careful reader, we reply, this might very naturally occur. Impressed with his perusal of one or two passages in Luke, to which he can recollect nothing quite similar in the other Evangelists, he makes the proposed examination, slightly at first, and then more fully as he grows interested. But, then, this careful reader will remember that if *Luke* gives us that memorable lesson on prayer, the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, *John* records for us, and he only, our Lord's pathetic and solemn prayer offered to his Heavenly Father just before He Himself was offered as a sacrifice; *Matthew* tells us we are not to use vain repetitions, for that we are not heard for our much speaking, and that our Father in heaven knows what we have need of before we ask Him, and that He will openly reward our secret prayers: and from *Mark* we learn that, after Jesus had one evening healed many, "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

We were speaking of texts just now, and of how rich the Scripture is in them. Here is one—"a *solitary* place." In such a place the robber may lurk; in such a place the prophet meditates, the pious man muses and prays. There the lonely feel their friendlessness; and there those who have no helper but God, feel his help all-sufficient. Solitary places are of many kinds, and are often very near to places where many, and even multitudes, are gathered. We will enter such an one. Here is an old man alone; and not far from him there is a multitude waiting for him to come among them. All the people are silently praying. They have offered the evening sacrifice; and whilst the smoke of it was still curling up to heaven, the old man has taken sweet incense, and is now within the temple, alone with God, offering it on behalf of the people. It is the hour of prayer, and, to this old man, of *answered* prayer. The multitude know not how blessed they all are, they and their children, in the answer made to the prayer of Zacharias. He and his wife, venerable people, had often desired a child. "If it might be,

Lord, if it might be!" perhaps the good priest had said. But the time had gone by. Not now could the pious Elizabeth look for the arrival of a son, but rather for her own and her husband's peaceful departure. Married people may be honoured, and very happy, without children. So, too, people may be worthy servants both of God and man without marriage, if they be called to that way of life. But marriage is honourable and safe, and the desire and love of offspring, how natural! Prophets and apostles we chiefly know as *spiritual* fathers,—Paul, Peter, John, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah. Some of these, indeed, were married and had children. But we know them not as founders of families. But "father Abraham," that great father of the faithful, — he waited and prayed for a son. And Hannah, that woman of a sweet and of a sorrowful spirit, — she prayed, and the Lord heard her, and gave her Samuel, that just man and wise judge of Israel. And Zacharias, he prayed; and now, at the time of incense, an angel visits him, to tell him that John Baptist shall be born. So, now that he had left urging

his prayer, that prayer is answered. How did the old man look as he came forth to the waiting people? Had anything happened to him in the temple? the people were asking. Yes, something had happened; you see it in his face. He looks amazed, humbled, and yet there is an expression of grave joy in his countenance.

The first notice we have of prayer, then, in St. Luke's Gospel is this of "the whole multitude of the people praying without, at the time of incense," while to the aged priest within it is said, "Fear not, Zacharias; thy prayer is heard" (chap. i. 10—13). The whole multitude praying!

> "Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
> A whole assembly worship Thee;
> At once they sing, at once they pray,
> They hear of heaven and learn the way."

Presently Luke tells us of a "multitude of the heavenly host praising God," as they sang of glory and peace and good-will; and, toward the end of the Gospel, we read of "the whole multitude of the disciples rejoicing and praising

God with a loud voice." We shall never praise with the multitude in heaven, unless we pray with the multitude on earth; we shall never rejoice with loud voices among the crowd of disciples, unless with silent pleadings we often pray to our Father that seeth in secret.

But must we, like Zacharias, grow old before the desire of our heart can be granted? Pass on a little in the Gospel, and mark how another old man, Simeon, takes the infant Jesus in his arms; and, in words that mingle prayer and thanksgiving, says: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!" (chap. ii. 29, 30). He died, as it were, about day-break, just as the day of the Lord Jesus was dawning on the world. He was glad that now, as he was leaving the world, its hope was about to be realized. Some things for which we pray may be given us soon; much that we ask for may be withheld till late: but our *full* desire is such that we see the blessing coming on our successors, only as we are going away to receive in another world what God has prepared to satisfy our heart.

Simeon reminds us of the aged Anna, of whom we read (chap. ii. 36—38) that she served God "with fastings and prayers night and day." What had this very aged lady left to pray for? Christ once explained to a questioner how a man might be born when he was old. But Anna was already, and had long been, a true daughter of God; and many years of widowhood, not without some weariness and painfulness we may be sure, had she passed. She had no wish to return into the joy of early wedded life; *that* might not be. To rejoin her husband,—*this* perhaps she hoped, though he had been to her but a memory for so many years. But she would expect this in her faith rather than seek it in her prayers. What did she pray for then? She prayed "for the peace of Jerusalem;" for she loved Jerusalem. Childless perhaps, she was, nevertheless, most certainly "a mother in Israel." Day and night she prayed for the city where so many of her large family dwelt. And still she cried, "O that the salvation of Israel were come! How long, Lord, how long?" Unhappy the man or

woman that must say, "I am too old to work, and I can no longer sing; indeed, I have no heart for it, if I could: and I have nothing left to care for." Nothing to care for! There is the whole world to care for, and to pray for, if you had but the heart to love God and man. People that pray in their youth and middle life will never want for *one* useful occupation in their age. Quivering lips can even *sing*, with a prayerful heart to help them: and perhaps Anna, despite her "great age," made of fast-day a feast-day, with a little quiet singing, when Jesus was brought into the temple. At least there must have been a lovely light on her calm withered features, like that of a soft October sunshine, as she smiled on the infant Saviour.

In due time this infant Saviour became a man. And what does Luke first tell us of Him as a man? Of his consecration to God with prayer, and of the heaven opening to Him as He prayed (chap. iii. 21). His mother Mary had made Him his "little coats," and taught Him his little prayers, doubtless, and watched with wondering

hope, and with many prayers of her own, his growth toward manhood. The youth, perhaps even the *boy* Jesus, would become familiar with many a "solitary place," and would make these places "blossom" to Him "as the rose," by his prayers. He is now a man; and He comes to his own servant, John, and is baptized by Him. With utmost freshness and purity this "Lamb of God" will present Himself to Israel, as the chief of the flock newly come from the washing. He prays, and heaven opens. Does it *so* open that Zacharias may look down, and see the son of his old age baptizing the hope of Israel? Very holy is the moment when Jesus with the water-drops glistening on his face and head, lifts to heaven the eyes and the voice of prayer. Surely Zacharias and Elizabeth knew of the time. And what was the response to his prayer? The "Holy Spirit" came as the answer. And in Luke xi. 15, we read, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Matthew says, in a parallel passage, "good things;"

Luke, more particularly, "the Holy Spirit," without which nothing is good, nothing holy and strong. God, then, gave to his beloved Son the good gift promised to us all; and Jesus Himself "asked and received that his joy might be full," even as He instructed us to do. His baptism was not expressive of his consecration to a work to which He went in his own strength. The baptism would not have been pure and filial without prayer; nor could the temptation which followed have been met and overcome but for the fulness of the Holy Ghost which this prayer sought and gained.

Let us now group together the remaining passages in which Luke speaks of our Saviour as praying. We read that "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, *and prayed;*" that, on another occasion, "He went out into a mountain *to pray*, and continued all night in prayer to God;" that He conversed with his disciples about the opinion the people had of Him, when He was alone with them, "*praying;*" that, about a week after this, taking three of them with Him, "He went up into a mountain *to pray*, and, *as He*

prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering;" that it was *as* "*He was praying* in a certain place," his disciples were moved to ask Him to teach *them* to pray; that as the time of Peter's trial drew near, He said to him, "Simon, I have *prayed* for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren;" that, when his own great trial came, He kneeled down and *prayed*, saying, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done;" and then, though strengthened by an angel, "being in an agony, He *prayed more earnestly*;" and when He "rose from prayer," it was from an earth moistened by "sweat" that, "like great drops of blood," had fallen from Him. And what was the last prayer of the Lord Jesus of which Luke tells? It was this, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But it is not sufficient merely to enumerate passages that speak of our Saviour as praying. "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed" (chap. v. 16); but when? After He

had been much with the multitude, and a great fame had gone abroad of Him. He thus rested awhile, and in privacy with God prepared for new trials of publicity with man: for He came forth from this prayerful rest only to meet, as He taught truth and did good, doctors and dignitaries full of anger against Him.

And when was it that "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer unto God?" (chap. vi. 12.) It was after the powerful men, and, as was supposed, the pious men, of the day were "filled with madness against Him," because of his Sabbath-breaking, as they chose to consider it. He had restored a withered arm to its healthy size and strength, made it fit, on the Sabbath, for week-day work, honest, happy, grateful labour. This was the good deed that made his enemies angry and mad. *They* "commune one with another what they may do to Him;" *He* communes with God, seeking fresh courage and fresh wisdom for his work. What if the right arm of Jesus Himself, that "right arm which is bringing salvation," were now to wither? and failing courage, or a

perplexed and anxious spirit would cause it to wither. Alas then for Israel and the world! But Christ, on the mountain, draws nearer and nearer to God—to the Strong, for strength. In calm solitary elevation above the unwise tumultuous world, He spends the night. But his thoughts are not of yesterday only, but of to-morrow also, and chiefly. For on the morrow after this night of prayer, He chose his Apostles. Little knew Peter and the rest, how they and many others, their associates, were the objects of Christ's thoughts and prayers that night. It was not for Himself only that He prayed; it was for his disciples. What a work lay before them! True, from the first journey the seventy disciples took they returned with joy, crying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us;" and, doubtless, the Apostles rejoiced as they rested after their first labours and told Jesus what they had done, and what they had taught. But there were difficult sorrowful days in store for all the followers of Christ. Well might He pray for wisdom to choose the ablest men for the work to be done. "The cold midnight air,"—to Him it proved

invigorating; the mountain silence not oppressive but consoling; the wakeful night not wearisome, but, if very solemn, also sweet. He communes with God concerning a work the difficulties of which only God knows. From that mountain, at the midnight, with eyes that pierce the darkness of space and time, He sees, spiritually, coming sorrows and triumphs—sees the messengers of life and mercy go forth conquering and yet to conquer in his Name. As in the silent heaven the clouds grow full of their bounteous burdens, and charge themselves with strong but beneficent electric fire, so the uplifted soul is replenished and inspired in the hours of communion with God. The hour of prayer is the hour when prophetic hope dawns in the soul, the hour when wearied strength is refreshed by the love of God poured forth to it like "oil and wine."

It was, again, upon a mountain into which He had ascended for prayer, that our Lord was transfigured (chap. ix. 28, 29). He had conversed with his disciples respecting men's opinion of Him (verses 18, 19) after He had

"prayed alone," after He had prepared Himself by prayer to tell them wisely and calmly what He knew, and what even they were so slow to learn, viz., that He must suffer and die. "What, *die!* the Saviour, the Deliverer of Israel, die! where then is the kingdom we have heard of?" "*You* shall not taste of death till you see it coming," said Jesus; "the Son of Man must taste of death that it *may* come." But his death is glorious as well as sorrowful. Some of these disciples were to see a sparkle of their Lord's *coming, eternal,* glory, and hear men, in bright immortal clothing, who had died long ago but were alive still, talk of the departure the Lord should take from Jerusalem in his chariot of fiery torture. Peter, James, and John go up with Christ into the mountain to pray. And as He prays He is transfigured. Again Heaven greets Him as at his baptism; again the approving Voice is heard. Christ consecrates Himself for work, at baptism, *by prayer;* He consecrates Himself *now* to go forth and meet his approaching sufferings, *again by prayer.*

And when, not the cloud of heaven was about

Him, but the dark angry cloud of hell, when the hour of sorrow was not only near, but had come, in the exceeding sorrow of his soul, the Saviour once more prayed (chap. xxii. 39—46). And it is Luke, the physician, who so well knew the bodily signs of anguish, and who, beloved and most kind-hearted man, was filled with the spirit of sympathy and of supplication,—a man to weep with those that weep, to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to pray with those that pray: it is Luke who tells us of the bleeding sweat, and of the Saviour so praying in his distress that, as his pains increased, He prayed ever more earnestly. So should men pray, holding very very fast to the Almighty Hand when their feet are on a slippery way in the darkness. When heart-break, and shrinking flesh, and the spiritual horrors of a lonely adversity, are all ours, then must we cry, and cry, till the cry for help reaches the very centre of heaven, and, as it were, indissolubly binds our soul, tossing in the dark waves amid the howling wrathful tempest,—binds it, by the cord of Love that cannot be broken, to the very heart of God.

The holy angels that, so to say, guard the heavenly coast and watch the stormy sea of this world, how often do they launch forth to our help the rocket of a swift flashing thought, attached to the line of heavenly truth; and even as Paul was saved in a basket let down by the wall of Damascus at night, so we, in the basket, the frail vessel, of our faith, are rescued from utter shipwreck of hope and good conscience by these friendly deliverers. If it be a good work to save the endangered seaman, is it not a good work to save the endangered soul? If man cries for help to his brother man, and the cry is heeded, and help given, where it is possible; shall not man cry unto God, to whom "all things are possible?" and will not *He* hear? The God to whom all things are possible heard Christ in his agony, and saved Him from going back at this dreadful hour, as *the man* Christ Jesus might have done—yes, gone back from the cross to the perdition of the world. But "*God* was *in* Christ;" therefore the agony and the cross were possible, and the victory of the Spirit of Evil impossible.

Twice, as Luke tells us, once before his agony (chap. xxii. 40, 46) and again after it, did Christ urge his disciples to pray—"pray that ye enter not into temptation." He that would walk amid flames, walk on waves and not sink therein, walk across snows and not, resting, sleep the sleep of death, must pray. For to pray is to invoke the Son of Man to be with us in the fires of temptation, and amid its waves and its snows. To "*enter into* temptation" is to be overcome and swallowed up of it. He that overcomes, instead of being overcome, remains alive, like Jonah, "in the belly of hell," in darkness and the depths; or, like the Hebrew youths, in the furnace, unconsumed, yea, unscorched.

But temptation has its *years* as well as its powers: it may be for a lifetime or for a day. What *then* of prayer? Luke gives us the lesson (chap. xviii. 1—8), "Men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint." Even the unjust will yield to a pertinacious claimant, and shall God reject a persevering suppliant? A widow pleaded for the redress of her wrong; and she came again and again to the careless judge

who at last, more tired of her than she of her pleading, gave decision in her favour. And will an unjust judge listen to a widow for whom he cares nothing, because her visits are many and trouble him; and will not the just God listen to the cries of those for whom He cares much, and whose many prayers to Him prove that from Him only is their expectation, and that their desires are steadfast? But, said Christ, will the faithful God find men trusting Him as they should do when He comes to answer their prayers, and by a rapid work of deliverance, after long delays, to bless them abundantly and for ever? Pray and be safe, pray and be strong; safe, though the waters threaten; strong, though the winds buffet. Pray and wait, and so be glad when the hour of answer comes. Pray and watch, and so be among those that hail "the new moon," or "the day-star," or the sunrise. But pray as valuing that most which is best; pray, not as challenging divine recompense for your goodness, but as imploring divine mercy because of your sinful infirmities.

Pray, too, as remembering that often you would not have needed *so* to ask, had you done your duty prudently. You must not be as the Pharisee, and glorify yourself before God; but, rather, like the Publican, must humble yourself that He may accept and exalt you (chap. xi. 9—14). And if you plead as for "three loaves," which you might have had in your own house, for the supply of a friend, be the more thankful that you get your request when you consider that you need not have had to urge it. If a neighbour, moved by our entreaty, will help us to help others, rising and giving us what we want at an unseasonable time, much more will God give us what we need to fulfil our part toward neighbour, or child, or friend, if we come to Him earnestly. He will neither reproach us, nor send us empty away (chap. xi. 5—8).

These parables of the widow pleading to an unjust judge, of the Pharisee and the Publican, and of the unprovided host, who has to beg loaves to feed his guest, and that at midnight, are all peculiar to Luke. And it is he who

shows us the disciples asking that they may be taught to pray. John, the son of Zacharias, taught his disciples: would not Christ teach *them?* He would: He gave them that simple, simple yet ample, form which we know so well. Nay, He talked with them about prayer; "ask," said He; "seek," said He; "knock," said He; "you shall not do so in vain:" and He ended his discourse by telling them that, for asking, they might even have "the Holy Spirit" (chap. xi. 1—4, 9—13). Not without asking can we have *the fulness* of the Spirit; not without this gift of the Spirit of Life can we live well, cheerfully, fruitfully. If we receive of this Spirit, we shall find it within us *the spirit of prayer*, and shall "pray always;" not "for a pretence making long prayers" (chap. xx. 47), whilst we come short in every good work; not profaning God's "house of prayer" (chap. xix. 46) by craftily going there only for our own credit or interest; not "praying the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest" (chap. x. 2), while yet we set our hand to no toil of spiritual husbandry and give

our foot no errand of mercy: not, if "*making* prayers" like John's disciples (chap. v. 33), making them only in the spirit of the Pharisee whom our Lord condemned: not praying *thus;* for to pray thus is to grieve that Holy Spirit which is given to us, to become the spirit of acceptable, prevailing, prayer; but praying like our Lord, often in his words, yet oftener according to the spirit of his example, and always in his name and in remembrance of his promises. He who prayed for Simon Peter (chap. xxii. 31) will prove a powerful, forgiving, Friend; He whose last prayer was for his enemies (Chap. xxiii. 34) will not become our enemy: He who ever strengthened and sanctified Himself by prayer, will bestow of his strength and holiness on those who sincerely and "day and night" seek his grace.

Prayer is not only request made to God, but converse had with Him. It is the expression of desire to Him so as to purify it, of purpose so as to steady it, of hope so as to brighten it. It is the bringing of one's heart into the sunshine, so that, like a plant, its

inward life may thrive for an outward development. It is the plea of one's better self against one's weaker self. It utters dependence so that it may obtain confidence. It is a humble and reverent talking with God. It is the expression and the exercise of love for all that is good and true. It is a wrestle with evil in the presence of Supreme Goodness. It is the ascent of the soul above time, into the freedom of eternity. In prayer the affections expand, the spiritual becomes more real, the actual less terrible or seductive; the weakness of man allies itself with the power of God, man's penitence with God's holiness, his desire with Divine love, his finite state of want and woe with God's infinite and eternal "fulness of joy."

In our brief review of more than twenty passages, some of them consisting of a few words only, some of several verses, we have seen a praying multitude and a praying priest; man in his venerable age, and woman in hers, still praying. We have seen John teaching his disciples to pray, and Jesus both teaching his disciples and praying with them. We have

seen our Lord praying at his baptism; again, at his transfiguration; again, in his agony and death. We have seen Him praying before He spoke with his disciples of the exodus he should accomplish at Jerusalem, and before He chose his apostles. We have seen Him praying for the timorous Peter, and for those who, in their ignorance, crucified Him. We have noticed his instructive and impressive parables concerning prayer. And what shall we now say, but—Desire earnestly the best gift, the Holy Spirit; Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation: *Pray always.*

THE END.

PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO., CITY ROAD, LONDON.

00110875

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018